

# **Sense, Matter, and Medium**



New Approaches to Medieval Literary and Material Culture

Edited by

Fiona Griffiths, Beatrice Kitzinger, and Kathryn Starkey

## **Volume 8**

# Enigma in Rus and Medieval Slavic Cultures

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DE GRUYTER

The publication of this book was financially supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Germany).



ISBN 978-3-11-077910-3  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-077922-6  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-077924-0  
ISSN 2367-0290

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2023944381**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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Cover image: “*You are a Priest Forever*” icon, ca. 1600 (?). Recklinghausen, Ikonenmuseum, no. 438.

Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

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## **Mystery of the Rite**

Boris Uspenskij

## 4 The *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the Cult of St Longinus

To the memory of Anne Pennington

*Who pierced the Lord with a spear? Longinus.  
(Conversations of the Three Hierarchs)<sup>1</sup>*

### 1 The Two Longinuses: Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion

1.1. The Gospel of St John tells of the soldier who pierced the side of the crucified Christ with a spear:

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. He who saw this [St John the Evangelist] has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth. (John 19:31–35)

In the other canonical gospels—the synoptic (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)—nothing is said of this. They do, however, tell of another Roman soldier who, on the contrary, is not mentioned in the Gospel of John—a centurion who was present at the execution of Christ and professed faith in him after his death:

Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’ (Mark 15:39, cf. 44, 45; see also Matt 27:54 and Luke 23:47)<sup>2</sup>

In the synoptic gospels the soldier who pierced the side of Christ is not mentioned, but on the other hand nothing is said in the Gospel of John about the centurion who became a believer. The evidence of these texts is complementary; it is possible that they

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<sup>1</sup> *Beseda trekh sviatitelei*, in: Vasilii N. Mochul’skii, *Sledy narodnoi biblii v slavianskoi i drevnerusskoi pis’mennosti* (Odessa: Tip. Shtaba Voisk Odesskogo voen. Okr., 1893), 94, no. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew and Luke use the word ἐκατόνταρχος, while Mark has κεντυρίων. Matthew also mentions companions of the centurion who were converted with him (“Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s son!’.”—Matt 27:54); Mark and Luke mention only the centurion.

are speaking of one and the same man. At any rate, in later interpretations these two men could be treated as identical, even if this identification is not universally accepted.<sup>3</sup>

1.2. In the canonical gospels neither the soldier who pierced Christ with a spear, nor the centurion who became a believer are named, but their names are given in the fourth-century apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* or more precisely in its first part (the *Gesta Pilati* or *Acta Pilati*).<sup>4</sup> They both have the name Longinus, and under this name (Gr. Λογγίνος, Lat. Longinus), both are known in the tradition of the Church.<sup>5</sup> In some versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* the soldier who pierced the side of Christ is called Longinus (Λογγίνος ὁ στρατιώτης / Longinus miles).<sup>6</sup> In other, later, versions this is the name of the centurion who professed faith in Christ (Λογγίνος ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος).<sup>7</sup> In those versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* where, in the description of the Crucifixion and death of Christ, Longinus is given as the name of the soldier who struck Christ with a spear, the centurion who recognized Christ as the Son of God is not named. In turn, if the centurion is named as Longinus, then in the preceding account not only is

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3 Nikolai Pokrovskii observed: “. . . Although the biographical details of this soldier and the centurion have undoubtedly been confused, a categorical conclusion that the soldier's name was transferred to the centurion is so far not possible [ . . . ] The centurion is sometimes given the name Longinus [ . . . ] but we cannot point to a clear example where the centurion is credited with piercing the side of Christ” (Nikolai V. Pokrovskii, *Evangelie v pamiatnikakh ikonografii preimushchestvenno viznatiiskikh i russkikh* [St. Petersburg: Tip. Departmenta udielov, 1892], 362–63).

4 In Tischendorf's edition, the earlier redaction A has the title *Gesta Pilati*, the later redaction B has the title *Acta Pilati* (Constantin von Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha* [Leipzig: Avenarius et Mendelssohn], 1853).

5 In the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* (VIII, 31) the centurion is called Petronius, but this name is not reflected in the tradition of the Church. See Maria Grazia Mara, *Il Vangelo di Pietro* (Bologna: EDB, 2002), 30, 90; Bruce M. Metzger, “Names for the Nameless in the New Testament: A Study of the Growth of Christian Tradition,” in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A Jungmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 1:79–99, 94.

6 See Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 232 (note), 262, 288. (chapters X and XVI of the Greek redaction A and chapter XVI of the Latin redaction); Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 442 (note 42), 460. (chapter X of the Greek redaction B and the Latin redaction; chapter XVI of the Greek redaction A); Hack C. Kim, ed., *The Gospel of Nicodemus: Gesta Salvatoris from the Codex Einsidlensis, Einsiedeln Stiftsbibliothek, MS 326* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), 25. (chapter X of the Latin redaction A). See also Rémi Gounelle and Zbigniew S. Izydorczyk, *L'Évangile de Nicodème, ou, Les actes faits sous Ponce Pilate (recension latine A) suivi de la Lettre de Pilate à l'empereur Claude* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

On the redactions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* see Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, lxxi–lxxvi; Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 1–2; Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 422.

7 See Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 288; Rémi Gounelle, *Les recensions byzantines de l'Évangile de Nicodème* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 252–53 (chapter XI of the Greek redaction B).

The Latin variant of this name (\*Longinus centurio) as far as we know is not found, evidently with good reason. See below, §4.2.

the name of the soldier not given, but all mention of him disappears from the story, and nothing at all is said about piercing Christ with a spear (see §5.3).

Similarly, in the apocryphal letter of Pilate to Herod, the converted centurion is called Longinus (Λογγίνου τοῦ πιστοῦ ἑκατοντάρχου), while in another apocryphal letter—from Herod to Pilate—this is the name given to the one who “struck Jesus in the side with a spear” (Λογγίνου τοῦ νύξαντος τὴν πλευρὰν Ἰησοῦ λόγχῃ); these apocrypha reflect different versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.<sup>8</sup>

Henceforth we shall call these two men Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion. In Church Slavic texts the name Longinus appears as *Лжгинъ* or *Ложгинъ*, indicating an originally nasal vowel.<sup>9</sup>

When speaking of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* we shall always mean the first part of the text (i.e., the *Acts of Pilate*).

## 2 The Uncanonical Tradition of the Account of Longinus the Soldier

2.1. The account of the soldier who pierced Christ with his spear in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (i.e., the story of Longinus the Soldier) reveals one more difference—and a very significant one—from what is said about this in the Gospel of John (19:34). While in the Gospel of John it is said that the spear pierced the dead body of Christ, in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* Christ is still alive; although in both cases it is said that from the pierced body flowed blood and water. This significantly alters the description of the crucifixion and death of Christ.

This feature of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*—its difference from the Gospel of John—has attracted the attention of scholars but has not been explained.<sup>10</sup>

2.2. We think we can explain this difference. For this we must make a small digression.

As has been stated, the story of the soldier is found in only one canonical gospel, the Gospel of John; in the synoptic gospels he does not appear (see §1.1). Besides, at a fairly early stage, no later than the fourth century, a phrase was inserted into the Gospel of Matthew (27:49) which appears to be a retelling of the cited passage in the Gospel of John (19:34). This interpolation is not found in the original canonical text of Matthew, but it is present in a number of representative ancient codices: it is, so to speak, an uncanonical addition to the canonical text of the Gospel of Matthew. Manuscripts with this interpola-

<sup>8</sup> Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 518, 526.

<sup>9</sup> *Slovník jazyka Staroslověnského=Lexicon Linguae Palaeoslovenicae* (Prague: Nakl. Československé akademie věd, 1958), 2: 137.

<sup>10</sup> See Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 4.

tion, which belong to the so-called Alexandrian type of New Testament text, were widely distributed, and undoubtedly could have been reflected in apocryphal writings.<sup>11</sup>

The text of the interpolation is: “ἄλλος δὲ λαβὼν λόγχην ἔνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα” (“but one of them, taking a spear, pierced his side, and there flowed forth water and blood”; Matt 27:49, interpolation).

This phrase differs in its language from its source, that is, the Gospel of John, which it paraphrases. This is not just a quotation but a re-phrasing differing in form from the source text. Compare the corresponding passage in John: “ἀλλ’ εἷς τῶν στρατιωτῶν λόγχῃ αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευρὰν ἔνυξεν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν εὐθὺς αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ” (“But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and immediately there flowed forth blood and water”; John 19:34).

In the Latin New Testament the same interpolation in the text of the Gospel of Matthew is found in the Old Latin version of the New Testament (the *Vetus Latina*), which preceded the translation of Jerome, the Vulgate. It coincides word for word with the Greek text: “alius autem accepta lancea pupugit latus eius et exiit aqua et sanguis” (Matthew 27:49, interpolation).<sup>12</sup>

The interpolation we are concerned with was made, evidently purely mechanically, in the place in Matthew’s Gospel *preceding* the description of the death of Christ. In fact, it is in the following verse that his death is recorded: “Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last” (Matt 27:50). Thus, it appeared that Christ was *still alive* when the soldier struck him with the spear.

This is precisely what is written in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in that version in which Longinus the Soldier who pierced the side of Christ is mentioned: “καὶ λαβὼν Λογγίνος [hoc accentu!] ὁ στρατιώτης λόγχην ἔνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ” (“and Longinus the soldier, having seized the spear, pierced his side and there flowed forth blood and water”).<sup>13</sup>

In the Gospel of Matthew the statement that the soldier pierced the side of the living Christ might be the result of an unfortunate interpolation but in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* this statement, it would appear, is of an entirely deliberate nature. For after the just cited phrase about Longinus the Soldier there follows the conversation of Christ and the

11 It is thought that the Alexandrian type of New Testament text was compiled in the second century, but the most ancient manuscripts with the interpolation in question belong to the fourth century (for example the Sinai and Vatican codices). In critical editions of the New Testament, for example those of Nestle and Aland, this text is presented as a variant reading to the Greek text of Matthew 27:49; in the canonical publications it is absent. Manuscripts with the interpolation are known by the sigla: κ, Β, C, Γ, L<sup>ε</sup>, 1010, 1093, pc, vg<sup>mss</sup>.

12 August Merk, *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* (Rome: Sumptibus Pontificii Instituti Bibliici, 1933).

13 Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 232, note; chapter X of the Greek redaction. Tischendorf puts this phrase in redaction B insofar as he attributes to it a later origin; he regards it—in our opinion, incorrectly—as an interpolation in the original text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (see below, §5.4). At the same time he treats this phrase as a variant reading of Greek redaction A.

thieves executed with him, and only afterwards is the death of Christ described. In this way the notion of Christ's divine nature is here expressed,<sup>14</sup> just as in ancient depictions of the Crucifixion Christ on the Cross is represented as the King of Glory, symbolizing his divine immortality.<sup>15</sup>

The apparently mechanical nature of the interpolation in the text of the Gospel of Matthew explains the reinterpretation of events in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.<sup>16</sup>

2.3. It is not hard to see that the phrase quoted above from the *Gospel of Nicodemus* referring to Longinus the Soldier *literally* corresponds to the interpolation in Matt 27:49, coinciding with it in its grammatical (syntactic) construction, which differs from the original text of the Gospel of John 19:34. We note in particular the participial form (λαβών) and the accusative form (λόγχην).<sup>17</sup>

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14 Cf. a passage in the Slavonic *Explanatory Palaia* (*Tolkovaia Paleia*): "But just as he took a rib from the sleeping Adam and Adam did not feel it, so they pierced the side of the Saviour with a spear and the Divine one did not feel it" (*Palaia Tolkovaia Po Spisku Sdelannomu v Kolomne v 1406 g. Trud Uchenikov N. S. Tikhonravova* [Moscow: Tip. i slovolitnia O. Gerbska, 1892], col. 131).

15 The depiction of the dead Christ on the Cross (with a bowed head and closed eyes) is of relatively late Byzantine origin (see in particular John R. Martin, "The Dead Christ on the Cross in Byzantine Art," in *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955], 189–96). Cardinal Humbert († 1061) in 1054 (*Humbertus Silvae Candidae Adversus Graecorum Calumnias*) accused the Greeks of depicting Christ dying on the Cross as if it were not Christ raised up on the Cross but the Antichrist—"Hominis morituri imaginem affigitis crucifixae imagini Christi, ita ut quidam Antichristus in cruce Christi sedeat ostendes se adorandum tanquam sit Deus" ("You [the Greeks] affix the image of a man who is to die to the crucified image of Christ, so that a kind of Antichrist is seated on the cross, showing himself to be adored as though he were God," PL 143:973). The Greeks did not respond to this accusation. See Richard Viladesau, *The Beauty of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Catacombs to the Eve of the Renaissance* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 197, note 56; Pokrovskii, *Evangelie v pamiatnikakh ikonografii preimushchestvenno viznatiiskikh i russkikh*, 358–359.

16 In the Syrian *Book of the Bee*, written in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Nestorian bishop Shelemon (Solomon) we read: "The name of the soldier who pierced our Lord with the spear, and spat in His face and smote Him on His cheek, was Longinus; it was he who lay upon a sick bed for thirty-eight years, and our Lord healed him, and said to him, 'Behold, thou art healed; sin no more, lest something worse than the first befall thee.'" (Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee: The Syriac Text Edited from the Manuscripts in London, Oxford, and Munich with an English Translation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886], 94, cf. 95). Judging from various kinds of abuse described here, Christ was alive when Longinus the Soldier pierced him with his spear; it is entirely possible that this is a reflection of the tradition of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. The information that Longinus the Soldier, after striking Christ, suffered a punishment (illness) corresponds with the detail in his *vita*, written by pseudo-Hesychius of Jerusalem. See Michel Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem* (Bruxelles: Societe des Bollandistes, 1978–1980).

17 In one case the phrase in question in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* reveals a closeness to the Gospel of John, distinguishing it from the interpolation in the Gospel of Matthew; both in the Gospel of John and in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* it is said that after the blow with the spear there flowed out "blood and water" (αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ), in that order, and not "water and blood" (ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα), as given in the interpolation in the Gospel of Matthew. We can see here a transposition of words motivated, most probably, by the

There are grounds to think, therefore, that the account of the soldier who pierced the body of the living Christ in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* derives precisely from this interpolation in the Gospel of Matthew. In fact, the two texts coincide in content (in both cases the spear pierces the body of Christ while he is alive) and, moreover, display a formal kinship. The only thing that distinguishes the text of Nicodemus from that of the interpolation is that the name of Longinus the Soldier appears in it (Λογγίνος ὁ στρατιώτης).<sup>18</sup>

The link we have demonstrated between the story of Longinus in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and the non-canonical addition to the text of Matt 27:49, is of prime importance for our argument. It permits us to attribute the story of Longinus the Soldier to the original redaction of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and not treat it as a later interpolation as was the case in the past. This link forces us to reconsider received ideas about the textual history of this work (see §5.4).

### 3 The Name Longinus the Soldier and the Word λόγχη (spear)

3.1. The name Longinus the Soldier in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (Λογγίνος/Λογγῖνος) in itself needs no explanation: it is a Roman name assimilated on Greek soil.<sup>19</sup> In the days of the Roman Empire this name appears to have been widespread among the

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hierarchy of the emphasized concepts; it is worth noting, however, that the same sequence—“water and blood” (ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα)—is found in the First Epistle of John (1 John 5:8). See below, note 97.

**18** In the Latin translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* the passage we are concerned with reads as follows: “accipiens autem Longinus miles lanceam aperuit latus eius, et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua” (Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 340, note; analogously Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 25). In this translation the beginning of the phrase to some extent corresponds to the text of the interpolation in Matt 27:49; also, as in the Greek text, we see here a participial form agreeing with the subject of the action. However, basically the Latin text of this passage in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* corresponds to the canonical text of John 19:34 in the Vulgate—“. . . unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit, et continuo exivit sanguis, et aqua.” In general, this translation is substantially different from the interpolation in Matt 27:49, the Latin version of which, as we have seen, is known in the Old Latin version of the New Testament (the *Vetus Latina*) and corresponds word for word with the Greek text of the same interpolation.

Therefore, if the original Greek text of this passage in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* derives from the interpolation in Matt 27:49, then the Latin translation of this text was corrected, as it would appear, to coincide with the text of John 19:34 (in the Vulgate version). Under the influence of the Gospel of John the Latin translators of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* translated Greek ἐννξεν “pierced” as *aperuit* “opened” which anyway accords with the cult of Longinus the Soldier in the Western tradition (see below, §4.2, the commentary of Augustine on this topic). Turning to the canonical text of John, the Latin translators of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* ignored the fact that John speaks of a spear thrust into the dead body of Christ, while in the passage they had translated Longinus stabs a live Christ.

**19** Longinus is a traditional family name (*cognomen*) in the Roman family of the Cassii in the second and first centuries BC. Gaius Cassius Longinus was one of the chief assassins of Julius Caesar. In the time of the Roman Empire the Greeks frequently used adapted Roman names.



Greeks; at least we know several Greeks of that name in the first centuries AD (among them a well-known philosopher thought to have written a treatise on the Sublime); also known is the appellative *λογγίνος*, with the meaning “leader, chief.”<sup>20</sup> We cannot exclude the possibility that the Roman soldier who struck Christ with his spear in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was given a Roman name in a Greek adaptation.

Moreover, there exists a centuries-old tradition linking this name with the word *λόγχη* “spear.” This link was at one time asserted by Bollandist scholars,<sup>21</sup> and since then has frequently been cited by various authors.<sup>22</sup> Michel Aubineau, the authoritative writer on the life of St Longinus the Centurion, has pointed out that this link was first observed in the *Church History* (Εκκλησιαστική Ιστορία) attributed to St Germanos I, patriarch of Constantinople (715–730; † 733).<sup>23</sup> This is a false reference: in a late reworking of the *Church History*, quoted by Aubineau, the name of Longinus and the spear are mentioned, but the link between this name and the spear is not established.<sup>24</sup>

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20 Cf. “*λογγίνος*, idem qui *λογγάρχη*,” with the meaning of *ductor* (Charles Du Fresne Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis*, vol. 1 [Lyon: Anisson, J. Posuel et C. Rigaud, 1688], col. 820). This word is found in *De thematibus* (I, introduction) written by Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913–959) as a term for a military leader: *λογγίνους γάρ ἔλεγον τοὺς χιλιάρχους, καὶ κεντουρίωνας τοὺς ἑκατοντάρχους, καὶ κόμητας τοὺς νῦν στρατηγούς, “chiliarchs [military tribunes] were called longinoi, hekatontarchs were called centurions, and those who are now called strategoi [generals] were called comites [counts]”* (*Constantinus Porphyrogenitus: De thematibus et de administrando imperio* [Bonn: Impensis Ed. Weberi, 1840], 13). One might have thought that this word is reflected in the name of Longinus the Centurion were it not for another explanation which seems to us to be probable, i.e., that Longinus the Soldier was recognized to be the same person as the Centurion, and the name of the former was transferred to the latter (see below, §5.3, 6.3).

21 See Johannes Bollandus and Godefridus Henschenius, eds., “De S. Longino Milite et S. Longino Centurione cum duobus sociis martyribus in Cappadocia,” in *Acta Sanctorum Martii* (Antwerp: J. Meursius, 1668), 375.

22 See for example Johann Albert Fabricius, *Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti* (Hamburg: Sumptib. Benjam. Schiller, 1703), 259, note; Richard Adelbert Lipsius, *Die Pilatus-Acten kritisch untersucht* (Kiel: Schwerts’sche Buchhandlung, 1871), 38; Pokrovskii, *Evangelie v pamiatnikakh ikonografii preimushchestvenno viznatiiskikh i russkikh*, 362; Gabriel Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’Évangile aux XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles d’après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos* (Paris: Fontemoing et Cie, 1916), 425; Metzger, “Names for the Nameless in the New Testament,” 94.

23 “. . . le rapprochement *λόγχη/Λογγίνος* n’est attesté que très tardivement par Germain de Constantinople († 733), dans son *Explication de la sainte liturgie* (PG 98:397c),” see Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d’Hesychius de Jerusalem*, 2:781.

24 See here: “Ἀντί γὰρ τῆς λογχῆς τῆς κεντησάσας τὸν Χριστὸν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ ὑπὸ Λογγίνου, ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ λόγχη. Nam vice lanceae quae pinxit Christum in cruce a Longino, est haec lancea” (PG 98:397c). In the Slavic translation “Копіе же знаменидеть вмести копіа, ниже прободе Логгинъ ребра Г[о]с[п]о[ди]на” (*Skrizhal’* [Moscow: Pechatnyi dvor, 1656], 143 of the separate pagination of the commentary of the liturgy; see Tatyana Afanasyeva (Afanas’eva), “Slavonic Commentaries on the Liturgy: Symbols and Church Usage,” in the present volume). The implication is that the liturgical knife (*λόγχη, kopue*) as an instrument used by the priest in the liturgy, corresponds to the spear with which Longinus pierced the side of Christ (see below, §7.2).

3.2. This tradition finds support in another source: the link between the name of the soldier who pierced Christ with a spear (i.e., Longinus the Soldier) and the word λόγχη “spear” is reflected in the inscriptions in Cappadocian frescoes of the tenth–thirteenth centuries. On the frescoes depicting the Crucifixion in a number of cases above the soldier there appears the inscription ΛΟΝΧΗΝΟC, maintaining the etymological connection with λόγχη “spear” (thus in the churches of Qaranleq Kilissé, Elmale Kilissé, Tschareqle Kilissé).<sup>25</sup>

Being linked with λόγχη “spear” the name Λονχηνος represents an alternative form of the name Λογγίνος (Λογγίνος). The letters *eta* (η) and *iota* (ι) from the second century AD were read indiscriminately as [i]; while the letter *gamma* (γ) from about the fourth century was pronounced as a voiced fricative.<sup>26</sup> These forms were thus very close in sound; the difference between them is the pronunciation of two consonants close in articulation, a voiced (γ) and a correlated unvoiced fricative (χ).

The name Λονχηνος looks like a neologism, the result of a wordplay with the bookish form Λογγίνος (Λογγίνος), a kind of re-etymologization. In Greek the word λονχηνος seems never to have existed; at least in the *Digital Library of Greek Literature (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae)* this word, and any variant of it, is not recorded. The word could very probably have arisen as a *hapax legomenon*, an *ad hoc* formation. This randomly created word, reflecting a linguistic association, not a linguistic usage, could have been provisionally translated as “the man of the spear,”<sup>27</sup> or “the spear man,” “a man associated with a spear” and so on (cf. at the same time λογχίτης “spear-carrier”).<sup>28</sup>

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The late reworking of the *Church History* of Patriarch Germanos is known in the manuscripts of the 14th–16th centuries. See Nilo Borgia, *Il commentario liturgico di S. Germano patriarca costantinopolitano e la versione latina di Anastasio Bibliotecario* (Grottaferrata: Tipografia Italo-Orientale “S. Nilo,” 1912), 2–3. 25 See Guillaume de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin: les églises rupestres de Cappadoce. Planches* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1925), 2:figs. 100/1, 116/2, 127/1; Guillaume de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l’art byzantin: les églises rupestres de Cappadoce. Texte* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1925), 1:414, 446, 464. See also Marcell Restle, *Die Byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien*, vol. 2 (Recklinghausen: Bongers, 1967), figs. 183, 237. Regarding occasional other single variants of the spelling of this name on the Cappadocian frescoes see below, note 69. Unlike these variants the form ΛΟΝΧΗΝΟC is repeated in the frescoes.

26 W. Sidney Allen, *Vox Graeca: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 28–30, 70.

27 The genitive case here expresses not possession in its normal sense, but in a relative sense, i.e., not a man belonging to a spear but a man associated with a spear.

28 Cf. “Ο Λονχηνός à Tchareqle-Klissè ou Qaranleq-Klissè [names of Cappadocian churches], ce qui veut dire ‘l’homme à la lance.’” (Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie*, 425, note 1). To judge from the accent in the word Λονχηνός, Millet perceives here the ending -ηνός. This ending is usually found in toponyms and more generally indicates origin from where, or out of which (coming from a particular place or made of a particular material). Consequently Λονχηνός, the word restored by this scholar, could mean “a man from a place called Λονχη” or “a man made from a spear.” Moreover, the word λόγχη “spear” also has the meaning “a troop of spearmen” (in works of the tragic poets) and a man from such a troop theoretically could be called λονχηνός. However this may be, there are no recorded examples of such a usage in Greek. I should like to take this opportunity to thank M. M. Sokol’skaia for consultations on Greek.

The association of the name Λογγίνος with the word λόγχη “spear” indicates that this name originally referred to Longinus the Soldier, and not Longinus the Centurion.

## 4 The Cult of Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion: Divergencies between the Western and Eastern Traditions

4.1. In the Christian East, in the Greek tradition, only Longinus the Centurion is revered (feast day 16 October).<sup>29</sup> Here the cult of Longinus the Soldier is unknown, and he generally appears as a definitely negative character (see below, §7.1).<sup>30</sup>

The opposite is true in the West, in the Latin tradition, where it is Longinus the Soldier, who spilled the blood of Christ, who is revered (feast day 15 March). Among Catholics the name Longinus is associated with this soldier, although there can be a secondary association of the name with the centurion (while among the Orthodox the link is only with the centurion).<sup>31</sup> There is no cult in the West of Longinus the Centurion independent of the figure of Longinus the Soldier. Devotion to Longinus the Centurion alone, independent of the figure of Longinus the Soldier, was generally considered in the West to be a Greek practice;<sup>32</sup> characteristically the naming of the centurion as “Longinus” occurs only in a later Greek version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (redaction B), but in the Latin version it appears to be completely absent (see §1.2).

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<sup>29</sup> See Kirill of Turov in the *Sermon on Easter (Slovo na Sviatuiu Paskhu)*: “Yesterday we were crucified together with the thief [cf. Luke 23:40–43], today we rose again with you; yesterday with Longinus we cried out ‘In truth you are the Son of God,’ today with the angels we say: ‘In truth Christ is risen!’” (Konstantin F. Kalaidovich, *Pamiatniki rossiiskoi slovesnosti XII veka izdannye s ob’iasnieniem, variantami i obraztsami pocherkov* [Moscow: Tip. Semena Selivanskago, 1821], 17).

<sup>30</sup> There is no such saint in the calendar of the Eastern church. See Sergii Spasskii, *Polnyi mesiatseslov vostoka*, 3 vols (Vladimir: Tipō–Litografiia V.A. Parkova, 1901).

<sup>31</sup> “La légende de Longin est racontée dans tous les martyrologes les mieux connus des Églises grecque et latine. Toutefois, il existe une différence essentielle dans les deux versions grecque et latine. Dans la légende grecque qui s’appuie sur Mathieu et Marc, Longin est le centurion qui commande les soldats pendant le Crucifiement; il n’est pas nécessairement celui qui perce le flanc du Christ. Dans la légende latine qui s’appuie sur Jean, Longin est un soldat (appelé souvent centurion) qui perce le flanc du Christ” (Knut Berg, “Une iconographie peu connue du Crucifiement,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 9 (1957): 319–28, at 320).

<sup>32</sup> The Bollandist scholars, authors of a long article on both the Longinuses, speak of the independent devotion to Longinus the Centurion as a Greek tradition: “De S. Longino centurione ejus apud Graecos cultus” (Bollandius and Henschenius, “De S. Longino Milite et S. Longino Centurione Cum Duobus Sociis Martyribus in Cappadocia,” 381–383).

4.2. Longinus the Soldier is listed in the Roman martyrology,<sup>33</sup> he is the patron saint of Mantua where his relics are preserved together with the drops of Christ's blood shed by him. Devotion to Longinus the Soldier is entirely linked here with the cult of the Holy Blood and thus with the Eucharist.<sup>34</sup>

Noteworthy in this respect is the depiction of the Crucifixion in a miniature in the Regensburg Lectionary (between 1267 and 1276) in the collection of Keble College, Oxford (Figure 4.1): the figure of Longinus the Soldier is here transformed into a female figure with a spear and the inscription "sponsa," that is, bride.<sup>35</sup> This is the Church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22–24). She pierces the body of Christ with a spear (from his right side) and blood flows out; this blood flowing from the side of Christ prefigures the Eucharist (see §7.2).<sup>36</sup> Iconographically this goes back to the depiction of Longinus the Soldier; this specific iconography is found only in the Western tradition.

St Augustine speaks about the link between the blood flowing from the side of Christ and the Eucharist in his commentary on the Gospel of John:

"one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out" (John 19:34). A significant word was made use of by the evangelist, in not saying "pierced," or "wounded" his side, or anything else, but 'opened' that thereby, in a sense, the gate of life should be thrown open, from whence have flowed forth the sacraments of the Church, without which there is no entrance to the life which is the true life. (*In Ioannis Evangelium tractatus*, XIX, 34; cf. *De civitate Dei*, XV, 26)<sup>37</sup>

See also the *Manuale* of pseudo-Augustine:

33 "Caesareae in Cappadocia passio sancti Longini militis, qui latus Domini lancea perforasse perhibetur" ("In Cappadocian Caesarea the martyrdom of Longinus the soldier who pierced the side of the Lord with a spear"—Manlio Sodi, Roberto Fusco, and Robert Godding, *Martyrologium Romanum: editio princeps (1584)* [Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2005], 76, under 15 March. There is a statue of Longinus the Soldier by Bernini in St Peter's in Rome.

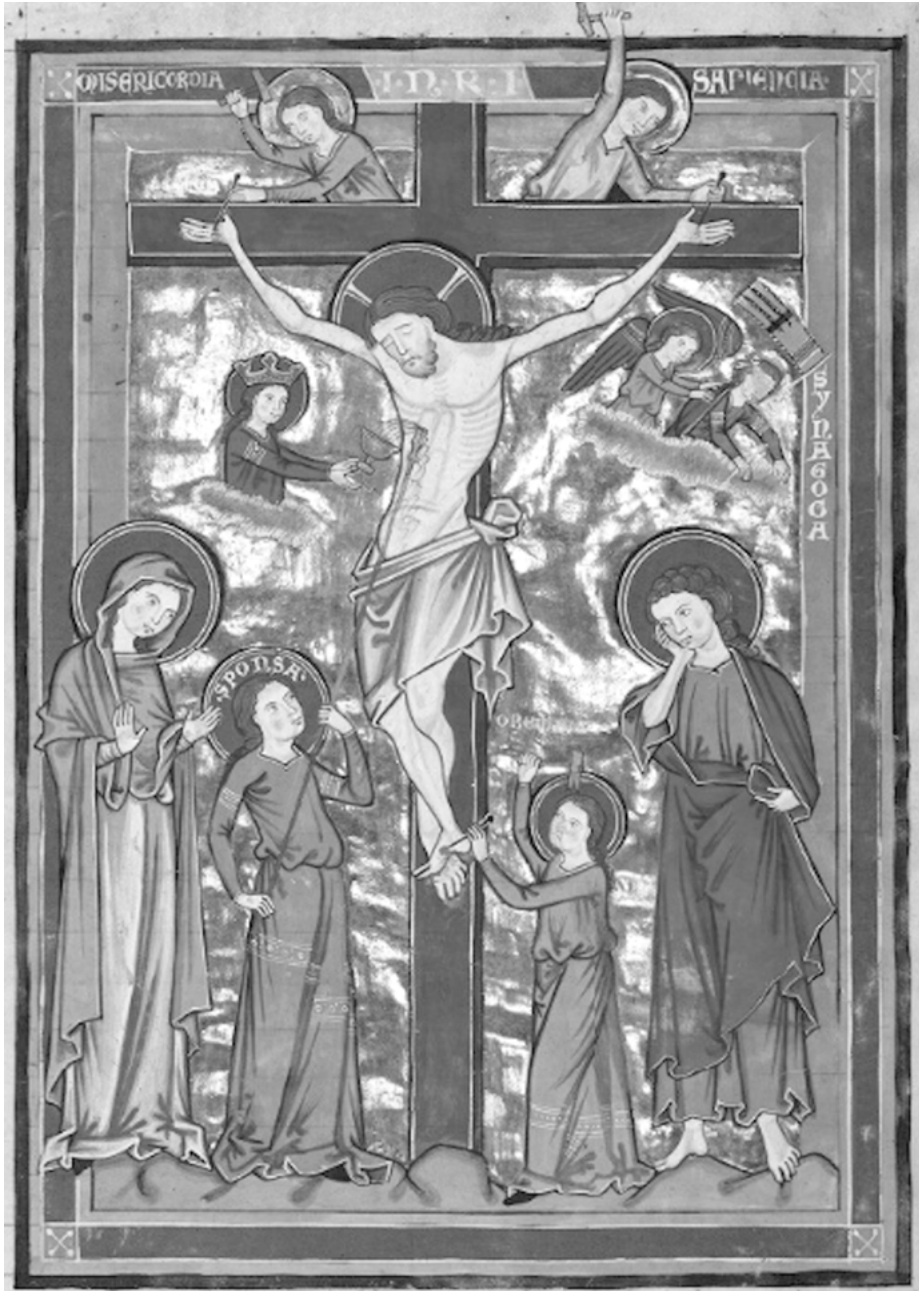
34 In the West the name of Longinus the Soldier may be also associated with the legend of the Holy Grail. See Rose Jeffries Peebles, *The Legend of Longinus in Ecclesiastical Tradition and in English Literature and Its Connection with the Grail* (Baltimore: J.H. Furst Company, 1911).

35 Oxford, Keble College, 49, fol. 7r. See Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2 (London: Lund Humphries, 1972), 139, fig. 452, cf. figs. 450, 451, 454, 528, 529, 531.

36 There are depictions of the Crucifixion in which an angel or figure representing the Church collect this blood in a chalice (Berg, "Une iconographie peu connue du Crucifiement," 322–23); in some of these this is done by Joseph of Arimathea.

37 ". . . unus militum lancea latus eius aperuit, et continuo exivit sanguis et aqua" (John 19, 34). Vigilanti verbo Evangelista usus est, ut non diceret: Latus eius percussit, aut vulneravit, aut quid aliud; sed, aperuit: ut illic quodammodo vitae ostium panderetur, unde Sacramenta Ecclesiae manaverunt, sine quibus ad vitam quae vera vita est, non intratur (PL 35: 1953; cf. PL 41: 472).

Augustine is quoting John 19:34 in the Vulgate version, which differs in wording from the Greek text of the Gospel. In particular, the Greek ἐνυξεν "pierced" (aor. of νύσσω) corresponds to the Latin of the Vulgate *aperuit* "opened" (perf. of *aperio*). In the *Vetus Latina*, which preceded the Vulgate, the word was *pupugit* "pierced" (perf. of *pungo*), see above, §2.2.



**Figure 4.1:** *Crucifixion*. Miniature from the Regensburg Lectionary, between 1267 and 1276. Oxford, Keble College, MS 49, fol. 7r. Source: Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (University of California Press, 1997), fig. 68.

Longinus opened for me the side of Christ (cf. John 29:34) and I entered in and rest there in safety. (*Manuale*, chapter XXIII)<sup>38</sup>

These words are based on the text of John in the Vulgate version but in the last reference the name Longinus is added to the gospel text. Cf. in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*: “Taking the spear, Longinus the Soldier opened his side and from his side came out blood and water.”<sup>39</sup>

It has been suggested that the devotion to Longinus the Soldier, like the devotion to St Veronica, derives from the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.<sup>40</sup>

## 5 The Identification of Longinus the Soldier with Longinus the Centurion

5.1. The cult of Longinus the soldier in the West is directly or indirectly linked to the merging of the two Longinuses. The preconditions for this process are to be found, as has been described, in the interrelation of canonical gospel texts (see §1.1).

This merging is very characteristic of the Western tradition and uncharacteristic of the Greek tradition.

The Greek *passio* of Longinus the Centurion, composed in the late fifth century in Cappadocia or Jerusalem (BHG 988)<sup>41</sup> in no way identifies Longinus the Centurion with the soldier who pierced Christ’s body.<sup>42</sup> The Latin variant of the *passio* (BHL 965) instead states that Longinus was that soldier who, after having pierced his body, came to believe in Christ and openly recognized him as the Son of God.<sup>43</sup>

Rabanus Maurus (c.780–865), commenting on Matt 27:54, the same place where the centurion who came to believe in Christ is mentioned, says in his *Martyrologium*:

38 “Longinus aperuit mihi latus Christi lancea, et ego intravi, et ubi requiesco secures” (PL 90: 961).

39 “Accipiens autem Longinus miles lanceam aperuit latus eius, et exiit de latere ejus sanguis et aqua” (Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 340, note; Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 25).

40 See, in particular, Gounelle and Izydorczyk, *L’Évangile de Nicodème*, 39.

41 Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d’Hesychius de Jérusalem*, 2:793–800.

42 “On s’étonne de ne trouver ici . . . aucune allusion au côté percé de Jésus: ‘L’un des soldats (εἷς τῶν στρατιωτῶν) lui perça le côté d’un coup de lance (λόγχη) et il en sortit du sang et de l’eau’. Ce verset de Jn 19, 34 a connu un énorme succès dans la tradition latine, où il sert de principal support à la légende de Longin. On ignore pourquoi, en si bon chemin, notre hagiographe n’a pas poussé plus loin l’amalgame, en identifiant le gardien de la croix, l’auteur du coup de lance, et le gardien du tombeau” (Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d’Hesychius de Jérusalem*, 2:780–781).

43 Bollandus and Henschenius, “De S. Longino Milite et S. Longino Centurione,” 384–386.

In Cappadocia, St Longinus, of whom in his *passio* it is said that at one time he served as a soldier under a Roman centurion during the Passion of the Lord and he opened the side of Christ on the Cross with a spear. Having seen the earthquake and other signs he believed in Christ.<sup>44</sup>

This note appears in the martyrology for the 15th of March, that is, the day on which the memorial of Longinus the Soldier is observed in the Western Church; so the amalgamation of the two Longinuses is here very evident.<sup>45</sup>

With time this amalgamation became more and more widespread in the Western Church. In the thirteenth century we find it reflected in the *Golden Legend* of Jacopo de Voragine, which was enormously popular in the Catholic West.<sup>46</sup>

5.2. The situation is quite different in the Greek, and in particular the Byzantine tradition. The Greek theological, hagiographic, and liturgical tradition firmly linked the name of Longinus with the centurion, and not the soldier who pierced Christ with his spear.<sup>47</sup> In the Western tradition, however, the amalgamation of these two figures was quite explicit from the earliest times.

<sup>44</sup> “In Cappadocia passio sancti Longini martyris: de quo in libello martyrii ejus narratur quod aliquando militans sub centurione Romano, in passione Domini latus ejus cum lancea in cruce aperiret, et viso terraemotu et signis quae fiebant, crederet in Christum . . .” (PL 110:1135).

<sup>45</sup> See Carl Schneider, “Der Hauptmann am Kreuz: Zur Nationalisierung Neutestamentlicher Nebenfiguren,” *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 33 (1934): 1–17, at 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Legenda aurea*, chapter 51, “De sancto Longino” (see *Iacopo Da Varazze: Legenda Aurea* [Tavarnuzze, Firenze: SISMEL-Edizione del Galluzzo, 1998], 1:307). See also the *Lives of Saints* (*Chet’i Minei* or *Reading Menaia*) of Dimitrii of Rostov (under 16 October): “Some say, about this Longinus the Centurion, that with his spear he opened the side of the Christ the Lord who had died on the Cross” (Dimitrii Rostovskii, *Kniga Zhitiia Sviatykh*, vol. 1. Sentiabr’—Oktiabr’—Nojiabr’ [Moscow: Tip. Sinoda, 1789], fol. 198). The *Lives of Saints* of Dimitrii of Rostov were mostly based on the Western sources, in particular on the Bollandist editions (see Georgii V. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* [Paris: YMCA-Press, 1981], 54).

<sup>47</sup> See Schneider, “Der Hauptmann am Kreuz,” 9–10; Ol’ga V. Loseva, “Longin Sotnik: Grecheskaia agiograficheskaia traditsiia,” in *Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: TSNTS “Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia,” 2016), 41: 429–431, at 429. Olga Loseva writes: “in the Greek sources they [the two Longinuses] are merged for the first time in the *Church History* attributed to St Germanos of Constantinople (PG 98:397)” (Loseva, “Longin Sotnik,” 431). This statement is inaccurate: in the text quoted (a late reworking of the *Church History* of St Germanos, † 733), the spear (λόγχη) with which Longinus pierced Christ’s side is mentioned but it is not stated that this Longinus was a centurion (see above, §3.1). The same assertion is made in an anonymous article entitled “Kopie” “spear” in the same *Orthodox Encyclopedia*—this article is devoted to the liturgical knife which symbolizes the spear referred to in John 19:34–5: “In the expanded redaction of the *Church History* it is said that the liturgical knife symbolizes the spear with which St Longinus the Centurion pierced the side of the Saviour (PG 98:397c)” “Kopie,” in *Pravoslavnaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: TSNTS “Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia,” 2015), 37: 506–507, at 506. However, in that source Longinus was not called either saint or centurion. Both authors were influenced by the later (essentially Western) exegetical tradition, of which there is no trace either in the *Church History* of St Germanos or in the reworked version to which they refer. In the original text of Germanos there is no mention of Longinus (this appears in the later reworking) but it is stated that the knife used in the liturgy is the spear which pierced Christ (see Paul Meyendorff, ed., *Germanus of*

In the Greek tradition these two soldiers, Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion as a matter of principle are not combined, quite the opposite—one is contrasted against the other. In Eastern iconography they can be represented in the same picture as two separate figures.

Equally, the two men may be separately identified in texts. For example, both Longinuses appear in the Lenten Triodion for Good Friday,<sup>48</sup> they are called by the same name but it is clear that the reference is to two quite separate individuals who cannot possibly be the same person:

Therefore, at the third hour, Christ was crucified, as says the divine Mark; from the sixth hour until the ninth there was darkness (Mark 15:33). And the Centurion Longinus, seeing these marvelous events [ . . . ], cried out with a mighty voice, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39). [ . . . ] Then the foolish Jews, unwilling to see the bodies on the crosses, since it was the great day of the Passover, asked Pilate that the legs of the condemned might be broken so that death might come more quickly. They broke the legs of the others, since these were still alive and, coming upon Jesus, as soon as they saw that He was already dead, they refrained from breaking his legs. One of the soldiers, Longinus by name, to please the foolish ones, raised his spear and pierced the right side of Christ, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water. On the one hand, [the outpouring] was as of a man, and on the other hand for more than a man.<sup>49</sup>

The fact that the two soldiers are both called Longinus goes back, one must conclude, to the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (see §1.2). However, in *Gospel of Nicodemus*, as we have seen, either one of the two can have this name, but not both at the same time (Longinus the Soldier in one redaction, Longinus the Centurion in another). In the Lenten Triodion the name is given to both of them. In the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion are not contrasted, but here they are.<sup>50</sup>

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*Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy* [Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984], 70–73, 84–85; Borgia, *Il commentario liturgico di s. Germano*, 19, 29). See below, §7.2.

The first references to the λόγχη “spear” as a liturgical knife are found both in the *Church History* of Germanos and in the *Against Iconoclasts* of Theodore Studite (759–826, see PG 99:489), but the name of Longinus is found in neither.

<sup>48</sup> The author of this text was Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos († c.1350).

<sup>49</sup> *Triod’ Postnaia*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Moskovskaia Patriarkhiia, 1975), fols 444v–445r.

<sup>50</sup> See also the Old Russian “On the Passion and Death on the Cross of the Saviour,” a text derived from the *Gospel of Nicodemus*; the holy centurion here is called Longinus and is not at all confused with the nameless soldier who pierced the body of Christ. Cf. the speech of Martha, sister of Lazarus, addressed to Augustus Caesar: “This Pilate handed him over to the Jews to be crucified, and they did crucify him and one of the soldiers pierced his side and blood and water came out. And this was seen by Longinus the Centurion, who witnessed it to me”; or the conversation of Augustus and Longinus: “the Emperor said to him: ‘man, who are you, that for your sake we should wish to die?’ In reply Longinus said: ‘Lord Emperor, not because of me but for the sake of my Christ and crucified God who, on the Cross, was pierced in the side with a spear by one of the soldiers, and blood and water came out.’” (Grigorii A. Kushelev-Bezborodko, *Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatury* [St. Petersburg: Tip. Kulisha, 1862], 3:104–105). In these passages Longinus the Centurion is explicitly differentiated from the anonymous soldier who pierced Christ.



5.3. How can we explain the difference in tradition between the Eastern and Western Churches? Can one conclude that the merging of the two Longinuses was a Western phenomenon from the beginning, that is, something that originated and developed in the West? Probably not.

We know of no early Greek sources which testify to such a merging, but there are oblique indications that, at one time, probably in late antiquity, this could have happened among the Greeks. Such an indication can be seen in the Georgian Lectionary of the Church of Jerusalem of the fifth–eighth centuries. Here, under 17th July, the burial day of St Longinus the Centurion is marked, and the text says that he had once pierced the side of the Lord. In the Latin translation which accompanies the published Georgian source, the text appears as: “July 17. In the village of Petan [Bethany?] the burial of Longinus, the centurion who pierced the side of the Lord with a spear, with his *passio*. All Saints.”<sup>51</sup>

This evidence enabled Michel Aubineau to posit the existence of a non-extant Greek *passio* of Longinus the Centurion written in the first half of the fifth century which corresponded to the Latin hagiographic tradition.<sup>52</sup> As well as the Georgian Lectionary just mentioned, Aubineau refers to Georgian and Armenian *passiones* of Longinus the Centurion (BHO 565) which align with the Latin version (BHL 4965).<sup>53</sup>

At any rate, there can be no doubt that the merging of the two Longinuses did not become widespread in Byzantium; it did not take root there, whereas it found a fertile soil in the West. The Greek *passio* of Longinus the Centurion, which has not survived in its original form, as Aubineau has established, was translated into Latin probably as early as the fifth century. However, the identification of Longinus the Soldier with Longinus the Centurion was excluded from the Greek text although preserved in the Latin translation. This merging of the two Longinuses, as we have remarked, cannot be traced at all in the Greek texts. In all probability at some stage, it was rejected by

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In a Russian *Sticherarion* of the fifteenth century the man who pierced the Lord is called Falas, an Italian, and described as a slave of Longinus the Centurion: “Прободый Господа Фалас именем, а родом фрязин, рабъ Логинов сотника” (RGB, Troitskii Coll. 408, fol. 373r).

51 “Mense iulio XVII. In Petano vico, depositio Longini centurionis qui Domini latus transfixit et cum eo martyrium. Totum sanctorum” (Michael Tarchnišvili, *Le grand lectionnaire de l'Église de Jérusalem (V<sup>e</sup>-VIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle)* [Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1959–1960], 2:22, no. 1094). K. Kekelidze earlier published the Georgian Lectionary of the Church of Jerusalem from two manuscripts, but there the merging of the two Longinuses does not occur: “In the village of Betanos—of the Centurion Longinus—All Saints. Gospel of Luke: “and the Centurion seeing this” (23:47),—you will find in the Good Friday gospel reading” (Kornelii Kekelidze, *Ierusalimskii kanonar' VII veka: gruzinskaia versia* [Tbilisi: Skoropechat. S.M. Losaberidze, 1912], 120, cf. 364). M. Tarkhnishvili used manuscripts of the tenth–eleventh century not published by Kekelidze.

52 Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jerusalem*, 2:799, 804.

53 Aubineau, 2:803–804. With a reference to 1) Kekelidze, *Ierusalimskii kanonar' VII veka: gruzinskaia versia*, 188–192, and 2) Iohannes Baptista Aucher, *Plena descriptio vitae et confessionis sanctorum qui extant in veteri calendario ecclesiae Armenorum* (Venice: Typis PP. Mechitaristarum, 1813), 337–346.

Greek theological thought that concentrated, in accordance with the gospel account, exclusively on the cult of the Centurion.

It remains to add that the merging of the two Longinuses may explain the fact that in the various versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* the soldier who pierced the body of Christ with his spear, and the centurion who professed Christ, have the same name—Longinus (Λογγίνος). In the early versions of the account of Christ's passion and death on the Cross, in chapters 10 and 11, the soldier who pierced Christ with a spear is called Longinus (Λογγίνος ὁ στρατιώτης), while the centurion is not named—he is called simply “centurion,” ἑκατόνταρχος. In a later redaction the centurion acquires the name of Longinus (and he is called Λογγίνος ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος), while the story of the soldier who pierced Christ with a spear is completely removed from the preceding account. In this way, in the later versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* the name of Longinus the Soldier was transferred to the saintly centurion (see above, §1.2), and this is the result, it would seem, of the merging of their identities: apparently Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion were at this stage taken to be the same person.<sup>54</sup>

5.4. The phrase about Longinus the Soldier in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (from chapter 10) which we have been discussing above—καὶ λαβὼν Λογγίνος ὁ στρατιώτης λόγχην ἔνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ (“and Longinus the soldier, having seized his spear plunged it into his side and blood and water flowed from it”)—is not found in all Greek copies of that work. Consequently, in critical editions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* this phrase is missing and is given only in the additional variants. In collated editions of the Greek text of this apocryphon, in the passage about

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54 One of the earliest witnesses of the devotion to the saintly centurion among the Greeks is found in Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–after 394). Typically, he is not yet given a name but is just called “centurion” (ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος); he is identified in the same way in frescoes in Cappadocian cave churches (see below, §6.1). Gregory of Nyssa compares devotion to the centurion in Cappadocia to devotion to the apostles in other countries: “Which was more to the Church at Rome, that it should at its commencement be presided over by some high-born and pompous senator, or by the fisherman Peter, who had none of this world's advantages to attract men to him? What house had he, what slaves, what property ministering luxury, by wealth constantly flowing in? But that stranger, without a table, without a roof over his head, was richer than those who have all things, because through having nothing he had God wholly. So too the people of Mesopotamia, though they had among them wealthy satraps, preferred Thomas above them all to the presidency of their Church; the Cretans preferred Titus (cf. Tit 1:5), the dwellers at Jerusalem James, and we Cappadocians the centurion, who at the Cross acknowledged the Godhead of the Lord (cf. Matt 27:54),” (*Letter 13, To the Church at Nicomedia*, in *Gregorii Nysseni Epistulae* [Leiden: Brill, 1959], 54–55). Compare the analogous passage in the *Life and Passion of Longinus the Centurion* (supposedly of the sixth-seventh century) where under the name of Longinus are combined the centurion who professed Christ and the soldier who pierced his body (PG 93:1050). See Aubineau, *Les homélies festales d'Ésychius de Jérusalem*, 2:822; cf.: Boris A. Uspenskij, “Ilarion Kievskii i Psevdo-Isikhii Ierusalimskii: Neizvestnaia grecheskaia paralel' k Pokhval'nomu Slovu Ilariona kniazia Vladimiru,” in *Schnittpunkt Slavistik: Ost und West im Wissenschaftlichen Dialog. Festgabe für Helmut Keipert zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Irina Podtergera (Göttingen: V&R Unipress; Bonn University Press, 2012), 139–144, at 140.

the crucifixion and death of Christ in chapters 10 and 11, there is no reference at all to the soldier who pierced the side of Christ with his spear, just as there is nothing about him in the synoptic gospels.<sup>55</sup>

Researchers into the *Gospel of Nicodemus* seem inclined to assume that the phrase in question is a late insertion into the text, that is, they treat it as a marginal feature. However, this phrase, as we have seen, derives from an early source, an uncanonical addition to the text of Matthew 27:49. This obliges us to reject the suggestion that the phrase is a marginal feature and attribute the story about Longinus the Soldier to the original, proto-graph text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. It must be noted at the same time that this passage is found not only in Greek copies of the work, admittedly relatively few in number, but also in numerous Latin copies, where it is a fairly typical feature.<sup>56</sup> Eventually the passage also affected the Slavic versions of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, not only in translations from Latin, but also in translations from Greek.<sup>57</sup> There are no grounds for thinking that this is an innovation characteristic of only the Latin redaction.

It must be added that the name of Longinus the Soldier is found in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* both in the purely narrative part of the gospel text (in chapter 10, which recounts the sufferings of Christ) and in the subsequent recollections of what had happened (in chapter 16, in the speeches of Annas and Caiaphas):<sup>58</sup> “. . . και ὅτι λόγχη τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ ἐξεκέντησεν Λογγίνος ὁ στρατιώτης”; “. . . et lancea latus ejus perforavit Longinus miles” (“. . . and Longinus the soldier pierced his side with a spear”).<sup>59</sup>

The mention of Longinus the Soldier in chapter 16 of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (the final chapter of the *Acts of Pilate* in which the meeting of the Sanhedrin is described) most probably belongs to the basic text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*; in fact it is found in a large number of representative copies and can hardly be considered a later inter-

55 Primo Vannutelli, *Actorum Pilati textus synoptici* (Rome: Apud auctorem, 1938); Rémi Gounelle, *Les recensions byzantines de l'Évangile de Nicodème* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

56 The editor of the Latin text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, seeing that Longinus the Soldier's spear thrust to the side of Christ happened, according to the text edited by him, while Christ was still alive, noted: “This is a feature peculiar to the Late Latin version [of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* ],” see Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 4. The edition reproduces the text of the earliest Latin version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (Codex Einsidlensis 326, ninth-tenth centuries).

57 Cf. the Serbian translation from the Greek, thirteenth–beginning of the fourteenth century (the *Mihanović Homiliarium*, Zagreb, Zagreb, HAZU, IIIc19, published in Mikhail N. Speranskii, *Slavianskie apokrificheskie Evangelia* [Moscow: tip. A. I. Mamontova, 1895], 108.) See also the Russian translation from Latin, fourteenth–fifteenth century (RNB, Sof., 1264, published in André Vaillant, *L'Évangile de Nicodème texte slave et texte latin* [Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1968], 28.)

58 In chapter 16 he is sometimes known simply as “the soldier.” In the ninth–tenth–century Latin codex of Einsiedeln (Codex Einsidlensis 326), the soldier who pierced Christ's side is called Longinus in chapter 10 but is unnamed in chapter 16 (Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 25, 35; Gounelle and Izdorczyk, *L'Évangile de Nicodème*, 155, 179).

59 Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 262, 366 (chapter 16 of the Greek redaction A and the Latin redaction); Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (chapter 16 of the Greek redaction A).

polation. Apart from the Greek copies, the phrase is also in the Coptic and Armenian versions of *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which speaks to its great antiquity; there too Annas and Caiaphas speak about Longinus in chapter 16, although he is not mentioned in chapter 10.<sup>60</sup> One must assume that the reference to Longinus the Soldier in chapter 16 is linked with the passage about him in the narrative section of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* although this passage itself appears in comparatively few Greek copies.

Reference to the soldier who pierced the body of Christ with a spear is also found in the text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in other places (after the passage about the Crucifixion in chapter 10), but the name of the soldier is not mentioned there. Joseph of Arimathea recalls this episode in the exchange of words with the Jews who come to arrest him (in chapter 12 of Greek redaction A): “καὶ οὐ καλῶς ἐπράξατε κατὰ τοῦ δικαίου, ὅτι οὐ μετεμελήθητε σταυρώσαντες αὐτὸν, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόγῃ αὐτὸν ἐκεντήσατε” (“You have behaved wrongly with this just man. You have crucified him without a twinge of conscience, and even pierced him with a spear”).<sup>61</sup> Compare the Latin translations of this passage: “Et non bene egistis adversus iustum, quoniam non estis recordati crucifigentes et lancea eum perforantes” (chapter 12 of the Latin redaction),<sup>62</sup> “Non bene egistis adversus iustum et non recogitastis ne eum crucifigeretis sed et lanceastis eum” (chapter 12 of the Latin redaction A),<sup>63</sup> (“You have acted wrongly against a just man. You have not reconsidered the decision to crucify him and you have pierced him with a spear”).<sup>64</sup>

Finally, in some versions of the late Greek redaction B of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* the passage about the soldier who pierced the body of Christ with a spear appears in chapter 11—after the account of the death of Christ: “τὸν δὲ Ἰησοῦν ἐυρόντες τεθνηκότα οὐδαμῶς αὐτοῦ ἦψαντο εἰ μὴ εἰς στρατιώτης ἐλόγγησεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ πλευρᾷ, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξ-

<sup>60</sup> For the Coptic text see: Tito Orlandi and Mariangela Vandoni, *Vangelo Di Nicodemo* (Milano; Varese: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1966), 1:37; cf. 2:32. For the Armenian text: Frederick C. Conybeare, “Acta Pilati,” *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica* 4 (1896): 59–132, at 131. For the collated Greek text: Vannutelli, *Actorum Pilati textus synoptici*, 173.

R. Lipsius conjectured that originally the *Acts of Pilate* comprised chapters 1 to 11, to which chapters 12 to 16 were added later. The Longinus episode in chapter 10 was considered by Lipsius, as by other scholars, to be a later interpolation. In his opinion the name Longinus in chapter 16 appeared in a relatively early version (but not the original one) of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, while in chapter 10 it was inserted in a later version, i.e. it appeared first in chapter 16, and later in chapter 10 (see Lipsius, *Die Pilatus-Acten kritisch untersucht*, 38). The above-mentioned closeness of the passage about Longinus the Soldier in chapter 10 of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* to the interpolation in Matthew 27:49 obliges us to accept that the passage is not a late addition but the original text, thus rejecting Lipsius’s hypothesis.

<sup>61</sup> Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 236; Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 444.

<sup>62</sup> Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 344–345.

<sup>63</sup> Kim, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, 27.

<sup>64</sup> We see here that Joseph of Arimathea accuses the Jews (and not the Roman soldier) of piercing the body of Christ with a spear. This reflects the general anti-Jewish tendency of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

ἦλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ” (“And finding Jesus dead, they would not touch him, except for one soldier who pierced his right side, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water”).<sup>65</sup>

The blow of the spear, according to this last version, was to the body of the dead Christ, which corresponds to the text of John 19:34–35. Evidently this is the result of an editorial correction to the *Gospel of Nicodemus* to bring it into accord with the canonical gospel text. The soldier here is not identified by name, since Longinus in this redaction (Greek redaction B) is the name of the centurion (see above, §1.2).

5.5. Let us sum up what has been said so far. We suppose that the non-canonical interpolation in Matt 27:49 is reflected in the original text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. The passage about the Crucifixion in chapter 10 of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* originally spoke of Longinus the Soldier. This passage is based on the Gospel of Matthew, specifically in its non-canonical version containing the interpolation.

This interpolation was understood to mean that the body of the still living Christ was pierced by the spear (see §2.2); this understanding was reflected in the original text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which was subsequently translated from Greek into Latin. This interpretation received currency in the Latin version. However, the Greek text of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was later edited to conform with the canonical text of John 19:34–35; as a result the reference to the piercing with the spear disappeared from the account of the passion of Christ on the Cross (in chapter 10) and was transferred to the account of what happened after his death (in chapter 11).

By removing the account of Longinus the Soldier from chapter 10 of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* Greek theologians were apparently solving yet another problem. As already stated, the *Gospel of Nicodemus* reflects an earlier merging of Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion; for this precise reason the name of the soldier who pierced the body of Christ with a spear was transferred to the centurion who professed belief at the foot of the Cross (see above, §5.3). It was assumed, evidently, that Longinus the Centurion was that man who had wounded Christ with a spear, after which he came to believe in him and recognized him as the Son of God.

Such an interpretation was rejected by Greek theological thought, and the Greek texts were subjected to correction; they were amended in such a way as to remove everything that contributed to the merging of the two Longinuses. We have seen that this was how the Greek *passio* of Longinus the Centurion was corrected, from which the identification of the centurion as the soldier who had pierced the side of Christ with a spear was excised (see §5.3). *The Gospel of Nicodemus* was corrected in just the same way—the account of Longinus the Soldier in chapter 10 was removed, and the centurion who was converted at the foot of the Cross began to be called Longinus. In both cases the original Greek version was preserved in the Latin translation.

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<sup>65</sup> Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 289; Gounelle, *Les recensions byzantines de l'Évangile de Nicodème*, 238–39.

## 6 Longinus the Soldier in the Iconography of the Crucifixion

6.1. The image of Longinus the Soldier is frequently present in the scene of the Crucifixion, in many cases accompanied by his name in one form or another. Longinus the Soldier is usually depicted together with the man who offered Christ a sponge soaked with vinegar; according to the evangelists the sponge was offered at the end of a reed (κάλαμος, Matt 27:48, Mark 15:36) or on a hyssop branch (ὑσσωπος, John 19:29). There is no consistent tradition concerning the name of this second man; in the West he may be called Stephaton, Seaphton, Steaton or Calpurnius. In the Byzantine tradition, however he may be called Esopos (Εσσοπος) a name which may be linked with ὑσσωπος “hyssop.”<sup>66</sup> If the name of Longinus is associated with λόγχη “spear” (see above, §3.1), the name of Esopos is associated with the hyssop branch on which the sponge with vinegar was lifted to the mouth of Christ.

The oldest such representation is a miniature in the Syriac Rabbula Gospels of 586 in the Laurentian Library in Florence, in which the name ΛΟΓΙΝΟC is written above the soldier with a spear (Figure 4.2).<sup>67</sup> This is the earliest example of such a paired depiction and the earliest example of a depiction of Longinus the Soldier in which his name is given.

Another example would be the depiction of the Crucifixion of the eleventh century (an ivory carving) of south Italian workmanship in the Bode Museum in Berlin. Above the soldier with his spear is the name LONGIN[US]; above the soldier with the sponge is written the name STEFA[TON].<sup>68</sup> The eyes of Christ in ancient depictions with this composition are usually shown as open.

A number of depictions of the Crucifixion with Longinus the Soldier is found in frescoes of the tenth-thirteenth century in Cappadocian cave churches. As has been stated above, not infrequently he is identified there as ΛΟΝΧΗΝΟC (see above, §3.2). In a number of churches above the soldier with the spear is the inscription Ο ΛΟΝΧΗΝΟC, and above the man with the sponge is Ο ΕCΟΠΙΟC (thus in the churches of Qaranleq Kilissé,

<sup>66</sup> Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Texte*, 1:89.

<sup>67</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut., 1.56, fol. 13r. See Carlo Cecchelli, Giuseppe Furlani, and Mario Salmi, *The Rabbula Gospels Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. I, 56 in the Medicea-Laurentian Library* (Oltune: Urs Graf, 1959), fol. 13.

<sup>68</sup> See Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII.–XI. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1926), 4: pl. LII, no. 146a; Herbert L. Kessler, “An Eleventh Century Ivory Plaque from South Italy and the Cassinese Revival,” *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 8 (1966): 67–95. An analogous composition is found in a miniature of 975 in Angers, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 24, fol. 7v; above Longinus the Soldier is the inscription LONGINUS, above the man with the sponge—STEFATON (see Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2: fig. 390).



**Figure 4.2:** *Crucifixion*. Miniature from the Rabbula Gospels, 586. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut.1.56, fol. 13r. Photo: Wikimedia.

Elmale Kilissé, Tschareqle Kilissé). Here the centurion is also shown but he is identified simply as “centurion” Ο ΕΚΑΤΟΝΤΑΡΧΟΣ.<sup>69</sup>

One must assume that in all these cases the name of Longinus the Soldier reflects the tradition of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, where his name first appears. Moreover, the Rabbula Gospels is of roughly the same period as the appearance of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

Both these men appear as crucifiers of Christ and can even be perceived as his ultimate killers. According to the canonical tradition Christ yielded up his spirit after he had tasted the vinegar (Matt 27:48–50; Mark 25:36–37; John 19:29–30)—in which case his

<sup>69</sup> See Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Planches*, 2: figs. 100/1, 116/2, 127/1; Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Texte*, 1:414, 446, 464.

In other churches (Church of Qeledjar, the old church of Toqale Kilissé, the dovecote in Tchaouch In, Balleq Kilissé) in the Crucifixion scene we see the names ΛΩΝΓΙΝΟΣ and ΕΚΟΠΙΟΣ, ΑΟΝΓΙΝΟΣ and ΕΚΟΠΙΟΣ, ΑΟΝΓΗΝΟΣ and ΕΚΟΠΙΟΣ, ΑΟΝΓΙ[Ν]ΟΣ and ΕΚΟΠΙΟΣ, ΑΟΚΗΝΟΣ and ΕΝΚΟΠΙΟΣ, ΑΗΓΗΝΟΣ and ΕΚΟΠΙΟΣ. See Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Planches*, 1: figs. 40/3, 51/1, 66/1, 142/5; 3: figs. 169/1, 177/4; Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin. Texte*, 1:190, 224, 282, 540; 2:264; Restle, *Die Byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien*, 2: fig. 258. The centurion is not depicted in these latter frescoes.

immediate killer was the man who gave him the sponge.<sup>70</sup> According to the interpolation in Matthew (see §2.2) Christ died after he was pierced by the spear (Matt 27:49–50, interpolation).

Typically, a spear and a reed, on either side of the Cross, become the usual attributes in the symbolic depiction of the Crucifixion, widespread in Russian medieval tradition. Thus, on the communion bread in Russia before the seventeenth-century reforms of Patriarch Nikon (1652–58) a cross with a spear and a reed was depicted.<sup>71</sup> To this day this design appears on pectoral crosses, used by Old Believers not accepting the liturgical innovations of Nikon. If the Cross symbolizes Christ, then the spear and reed represent metonymically Longinus and the man with the sponge; at the same time their representations appear as symbols of the passion of Christ.<sup>72</sup> See also the miniature in the so-called Alcuin Bible (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. A.I.5, fol. 339v) of the first half of the ninth century, in which a spear and a reed with the sponge intersect in the form of a cross on the depiction of the Lamb.<sup>73</sup>

6.2. As a rule, Longinus the Soldier and the man with the sponge are shown together, on either side of the crucified Christ and forming a symmetrical composition, one on the right side of Christ, the other on the left. Moreover, Longinus the Soldier is always shown by the right side of Christ—by his right hand, that is, in the left part of the picture. The man with the sponge lifts the reed to Christ's mouth on the other side, on Christ's left, in

<sup>70</sup> John Chrysostom, however, says that the sponge with the vinegar was offered to Christ in mockery: “they gave him to drink just as they usually give drink to criminals—and that is why they had a reed with them” (*In Joannem homilia* 85, 2, in PG 59:462).

<sup>71</sup> See the description of the seal on the communion bread, abolished at the Great Moscow Council of 1667: the seal depicted an eight-point cross (i.e. triple-barred) with a spear, a reed, and Adam's skull in a circle, above which were imprinted the words “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (Konstantin T. Nikol'skii, *Posobie k izucheniiu ustava bogosluzheniia pravoslavnoi tserkvi*, 7th ed. [St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1907], 362, note).

<sup>72</sup> See the shrouds entitled *The Cross of Golgotha with the Instruments of the Passion* of 1550 and 1599, donations of Tsars Ivan IV and Boris Godunov, and analogous carved representations (Svetlana V. Gnutova, *Krest v Rossii* [Moscow: Danilovskii blagovestnik, 2004], 85, 87, 95–98).

<sup>73</sup> Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2, fig. 397.

However, on the twelfth-century icon *The Glorification of the Cross* (GTG, on the reverse side of the icon of the *Mandylion*; see Valentina I. Antonova and Nadezhda E. Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi XI — nachala XVIII vekov: Opyt istoriko-khudozhestvennoi klassifikatsii* [Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963], I:67, no. 7 and fig. 27), on either side of the Cross one sees the archangels Michael and Gabriel—Michael with a spear, Gabriel with a reed and a sponge; the symbols of Christ's passion are transformed into the instruments of his glorification. We know of no earlier examples of this representation. Reference to the Syrian origin of this iconography (see V. N. Lazarev, *Iskusstvo Novgoroda* [Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1947], 39; Konrad Onasch, *Ikonen* [Berlin: Union Verlag, 1961] 348–349; cf. Nikodim P. Kondakov, *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Sirii i Palestine* [St. Petersburg: Izd. Imp. Akademii nauk, 1904], 22, 285–301), do not solve this problem—in the Syrian examples cited in the literature as similar in composition to the icon of the Tretyakov Gallery, the archangels are not holding a spear and a reed with a sponge.



the right half of the picture. There are also icons with the soldier alone, piercing the side of Christ, but without a corresponding depiction of the man with the sponge. In almost all cases Longinus the Soldier, although his name is not always given in the picture, is on the right side of Christ (i.e., on the viewer's left), and his spear is therefore pointing to the right side of Christ.<sup>74</sup> Only in one case is the opposite arrangement found; this is discussed below.

That Longinus the Soldier pierced the right side of Christ is stated in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (in one of the later versions): "one soldier pierced him in his right side, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water."<sup>75</sup> The same statement is made in the Arabic apocryphal Gospel of John preserved in a manuscript of 1342 but reflecting, according to the judgment of scholars, the ancient Syrian tradition: "Several soldiers came up to him and pierced his right side and from it came blood and water."<sup>76</sup>

This reference accords with the ceremony of oblation in the Orthodox liturgy in which a commemoration of this event is accompanied by *piercing the right side of the Eucharistic Lamb* (for more detail see below, §7.2).

Thus, in the ancient depictions of the soldier piercing the body of Christ he is normally on the right side of Christ (in the left side of the picture), and piercing his *right* side; the spear, against expectation, is not pointed at the heart of Christ. There is only one known exception to this rule, but it is of particular interest because it is unique. In the earliest extant depiction of the Crucifixion—on an ivory casket of the 430s in the British Museum on the side of which are depicted scenes of the last days of the earthly life of Christ and his Resurrection—we see a soldier attacking Christ crucified on the Cross and piercing him with a spear (Figure 4.3).<sup>77</sup> The soldier is to the left of Christ, that is, in the

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74 See, for example: Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art.*, vol. 2, figs. 337, 393, 394, 450, 451, 454, 509, 519, 520; Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Évangile aux XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, figs. 461, 464. The single case of a depiction of just the man with the sponge, without the soldier with the spear, is in the Codex Egberti, and the inscription reads "Stephaton" (see Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2, fig. 392). As in the cases where he is depicted together with the spear-bearing soldier, the man is shown on the left side of Christ (i.e., viewer's right). An exceptional example of the representation of the man with the sponge on the right side of Christ (in the Crucifixion of the Walters Art Museum) is given a special explanation below, at §6.3.

75 "εἰς στρατιώτης ἐλόγγυσεν αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ πλευρᾷ, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ" (Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 289; Gounelle, *Les recensions byzantines de l'Évangile de Nicodème*, 238, see also 239; chapter 11, Greek redaction B).

76 "Gli si avvicinarono alcuni Soldati, e con la lancia gli trafissero il lato destro, e dalla ferita uscì sangue ed acqua" (Luigi Moraldi, *Vangelo arabo apocrifo dell'apostolo Giovanni da un manoscritto della Biblioteca Ambrosiana* [Milano: Jaca Book, 1991], 679).

77 This is one of the most ancient depictions of the Crucifixion. Another depiction of the Crucifixion of the same period is found on the doors of the church of Santa Sabina in Rome (year 432): Christ is shown here together with the two thieves who were crucified with him. Both the carved Crucifixions, one on ivory, the other on wood, are thought to have been made in Rome.



**Figure 4.3:** *Crucifixion*. Panel of an ivory casket, London, British Museum, 430s. Photo: Beatrice Kitzinger.

right side of the image, and consequently he is piercing the *left* side of Christ. The thrust is clearly aimed at the heart, and on the left side of Christ a bleeding wound is visible.<sup>78</sup>

This is the earliest depiction of the episode in John 19:49, that is to say the earliest depiction of Longinus the Soldier (although his name is not given in the image) and it differs from what is said in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. In all probability, this carving was executed before the tradition of depicting Longinus on the right side of Christ was established. It is possible that this iconographic tradition derives directly from the *Gospel of Nicodemus*; if so, then also the name of the soldier who pierced the side of Christ, and which side of Christ was pierced, have the same origin.

<sup>78</sup> Compare this description of the image: “At the far right of the scene, in a fine example of the carver’s technical dexterity, a soldier lunges vigorously into the foreground in order to pierce Jesus’ side with a lance (John 19:34–5). As a result of the high relief, and fineness of detail, the lance is now broken; however, the stump of the weapon can be seen in the soldier’s fist, and the wound it made can be seen in Christ’s side” (Felicity Harley-McGowan, “The Maskell Passion Ivories and Graeco-Roman Art,” in *Envisioning Christ on the Cross: Ireland and the Early Medieval West*, ed. Juliet Mullins, Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, and Richard Hawtree [Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013], 13–33, at 21). For a description of the clothing of the soldier: Harley-McGowan, 24.

This tradition is evidently linked to the axiological perception of the right side as being the true and significant side, and of special importance.<sup>79</sup> The blood and water which flowed from the body of Christ after the spear thrust has, from the earliest times, been understood as the beginning of the Eucharist, and thus of the Church of Christ. The right side has a positive significance and therefore the thrust of the spear, prefiguring the Eucharist is naturally associated with the right side of Christ. If we recall the medieval miniature examined earlier (§4.2; Figure 4.1): the figure of Longinus the Soldier is there transformed into a female figure representing the Church—she is opening the body of Christ with a spear, from his right side, and from it flows blood, which becomes the source of eucharistic communion.

In this way the placing of Longinus the Soldier on the right side of Christ reflects his association with the Church.

6.3. As has been stated, placing Longinus the Soldier on the right side of Christ, and consequently on the left side of the image from the viewer's perspective (where usually the Mother of God is shown) represents a persistent iconographic tradition. At the same time Longinus the Centurion is traditionally shown standing, or seated on a horse, to the *left* of Christ, that is, on the right side from the viewer's perspective, usually with St John the Evangelist. In those cases when Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion are depicted together, the inscription over the centurion does not give his name but simply has "centurion" (ἑκατόνταρχος).<sup>80</sup>

In general, if a representation of the Crucifixion includes both the Soldier and the Centurion, the name Longinus is attached only to the Soldier and not the Centurion. This is further evidence that the name Longinus originally belonged to the Soldier and only later became attached to the Centurion (see above, §3.2).

The transformation of Longinus the Soldier into Longinus the Centurion seems to be reflected in a Byzantine ivory representing the Crucifixion of about 1000 in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (Figure 4.4): the man with the sponge is positioned here to the right of Christ (viewer's left), and on the left of Christ (viewer's right) is depicted a soldier, but he is holding a sword instead of a spear; their names are not given.<sup>81</sup> We may assume that the man with the sword is Longinus the Centurion, who

<sup>79</sup> On this point see Boris A. Uspenskij, *Krest i Krug: Iz istorii khristianskoi simvoliki* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2006), 15–113.

<sup>80</sup> In just the same way in the early redaction of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, when both Longinus the Soldier and the centurion are mentioned, the first is called by his name, Longinus, and the second is simply "centurion" (see above, §5.3).

<sup>81</sup> See Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2 (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1934), pl. XLIV, no. 117.



**Figure 4.4:** *Crucifixion*. Detail of a two-panel ivory relief carving with the *Crucifixion* and *Ascension*, about 1000. Photo: Baltimore, The Walters Art Museum.

is shown in his usual place, while the man with the sponge is depicted in the place where Longinus the Soldier piercing the side of Christ is usually shown.<sup>82</sup>

The basis of this depiction is the traditional iconography which unites the two crucifiers of Christ—the soldier with the spear (Longinus the Soldier) and the man with the sponge (Stephaton/Esopos). Longinus the Soldier has become Longinus the Centurion and occupies the usual place of the centurion on the left side of Christ in the righthand part of the composition. As a result, the man with the sponge (Stephaton/Esopos) finds himself in the place which previously belonged to Longinus the Soldier, on the right side of Christ in the left-hand part of the composition.

<sup>82</sup> Goldschmidt and Weitzmann think that this Crucifixion depicts Longinus the Soldier and Stepha-ton, albeit that their position relative to Christ is reversed; according to them Longinus the Soldier is shown on the left of Christ (viewer's right), with Stepha-ton on his right (viewer's left). However, the two authors cannot explain why Longinus is holding a sword instead of a spear: "In the crucifixion scene below, Longinus and Stepha-ton's position is reversed [ . . . ]. However, there does not seem to be any real understanding, for the figure on the right [i.e., on the viewers right] does not seem to have a lance, but a sword in his hand" (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, 2:59).

If this is so, then the Baltimore Crucifixion may be evidence of an early association of the two Longinuses in Byzantium.

## 7 Longinus the Soldier and the Liturgy

7.1. Unlike the Western Church, where Longinus the Soldier is revered as a saint (see above, §§4.1, 4.2), the Eastern Church perceives him as an *entirely negative* character.

According to the interpolation in Matthew 27:49 he killed Christ (see above, §2.2, 6.1). According to the canonical text of John 19:34 he committed sacrilege by doing violence to the dead body of Christ. Here, for example, is what St John Chrysostom wrote:

When the soldiers came they broke the legs of the others, but they did not break the legs of Christ but to satisfy the Jews they pierced his side with a spear and thus did violence even to his dead body. What a foul and disgusting crime!" (*In Joannem homilia* 85,3; PG 59:463).<sup>83</sup>

Compare also the passage in the Synaxarion for Good Friday quoted above (see §5.2):

Then the foolish Jews, unwilling to see the bodies on the crosses, since it was the great day of the Passover, asked Pilate that the legs of the condemned might be broken so that death might come more quickly. They broke the legs of the others, since these were still alive and, coming upon Jesus, as soon as they saw that He was already dead, they refrained from breaking his legs. One of the soldiers, Longinus by name, to please the foolish ones, raised his spear and pierced the right side of Christ, and immediately there flowed forth blood and water.

In the apocryphal letter of Herod to Pilate there is a description of the punishment suffered by Longinus the Soldier after he had pierced Christ with his spear; immediately an angel of the Lord carried him across the Jordan to the desert where he was subjected to eternal torment—a lion eats his body, after which he is restored, and this is repeated over and over again until the Second Coming.<sup>84</sup>

This negative attitude to Longinus the Soldier is reflected in Eastern iconography: there are depictions which show both the soldier who pierced Christ with his spear, and another soldier offering him the sponge, clearly presented as negative figures.

One such is a miniature in the Greek Khudov Psalter of the ninth century in the State Historical Museum (GIM), Moscow (Figure 4.5);<sup>85</sup> on the right of Christ (viewer's left) the soldier who pierced Christ is shown; on the left of Christ (viewer's right) is an-

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<sup>83</sup> The observation of John Chrysostom may remind us of the words of Joseph of Arimathea in the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Joseph reproves the Jews not only for crucifying a just man but also for piercing him with a spear (chapter 12 of Greek redaction A, see Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 236; Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 444). See above, §2.3.

<sup>84</sup> Ehrman and Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels*, 526.

<sup>85</sup> See Marfa V. Shchepkina, *Miniatiury Khudovskoi psaltyri grecheskii illiustrirovannyi kodeks IX veka* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), fol. 67.



**Figure 4.5:** *Crucifixion*. Miniature from the Khudov Psalter, ninth century. Moscow, GIM, 129-D, fol. 67r. Photo: Wikimedia.

other soldier offering Christ the sponge soaked in vinegar. Both the soldiers have an evil expression on their faces, which leaves no doubt that they are interpreted as negative characters; their names are not given, and this corresponds with the canonical gospels. Below, on the same folio, are depicted iconoclasts smearing the image of Christ with whitewash; the vessel containing the whitewash is strikingly similar to the vessel of vinegar at the foot of the Cross. One might even suppose that the iconoclasts are using the same sponge as the soldier in the Crucifixion scene—in that way they would be a manifestation of that soldier, and the activity of the iconoclasts is compared with the acts of the tormentors of Christ. It is clear that the iconoclasts represent both the soldier who pierced Christ and the other soldier who offered him the sponge.

Generally speaking the very fact that Longinus the Soldier is traditionally represented paired with the man who gave Christ the sponge with vinegar means that he is perceived as one of the crucifiers of Christ.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> In the opinion of André Grabar, the presence of these two figures in the Crucifixion scene is explained first and foremost by the fact that they were witnesses of what had happened: “Ce deux per-



**Figure 4.6:** *Crucifixion*. Detail of the “Large Sakkos” of Metropolitan Photios, first half of the fifteenth century. Moscow, MMK. Source: L. A. Beliaev and I. A. Vorotnikova, eds., *Moskovskii Kreml’ XV stoletii*, vol. I (Moscow: Art-Volkhonka, 2011), 370.

Another example might be the embroidered depiction of the Crucifixion on the so-called “Large Sakkos” of Metropolitan Fotii (Photios) in the Armoury of the Moscow Kremlin (MMK) dating from the first half of the fifteenth century (Figure 4.6).<sup>87</sup> The soldier with the spear stands on the right side of Christ (viewer’s left), the centurion is on the left (viewer’s right). Their names are not given but they are easy to recognize. The centurion has a nimbus and is bearded, while the soldier has no nimbus or beard

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sonnages avec leurs instruments-attributs, et le coup de lance porté au flanc du Christ ont dû leur succès chez les iconographes, à leur qualité de témoins oculaires de la théophanie du crucifiement et à la symbolique du sang et de l’eau qui coulèrent du flanc de Jésus” (André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique* [Paris: Collège de France, 1946], 2:9, note 2).

It is difficult to agree fully with this interpretation. The man with the sponge (Stephaton/Esopos) has in himself no connection with the symbolism of theophany. When combined in the Crucifixion scene, Longinus the Soldier and the man with the sponge personify the crucifiers of Christ.

<sup>87</sup> See Nataliia A. Maiasova, *Medieval Pictorial Embroidery: Byzantium, Balkans, Russia. Catalogue of the Exhibition: XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantinists, Moscow, August 8–15, 1991* (Moscow: The Moscow Kremlin State Museums Publishers, 1991), 45–46, no. 10.

and has a distorted caricatured face. This face, moreover, is shown in profile; this is a convention in icons and generally in sacral representations when depicting devils or negative persons—to prevent contact with praying viewers.<sup>88</sup>

7.2. In the light of all we have said above, the symbolic depiction in the Orthodox liturgy of the soldier with the spear who pierced the body of Christ is of particular interest.

This symbolism appears with great clarity in the Preparatory (*Prothesis*) Rite of the Orthodox liturgy, the so-called *Proskomedia*, when after the exclamation of the deacon “Pierce, O master!” the priest takes the *spear* (Gr. λόγχη, Sl. *kopie*, i.e., the liturgical knife representing the spear) and pierces the *Lamb* (the central part of the communion bread which in the liturgy becomes the body of Christ) in the right side (i.e., the right side of the Lamb, the left of the officiating priest) just as the right side of Christ was pierced by the soldier in depictions of the Crucifixion (see above, §4.2; Figure I).<sup>89</sup> While piercing the Lamb the priest speaks the words of the Gospel of John: “one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true” (John 19:34), after which the deacon offers the priest a vessel of wine and water which symbolize the blood and water which flowed from the body of Christ after he was pierced by the spear.<sup>90</sup>

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**88** One may assume that this depiction is based on the traditional composition in which the soldier with the spear is on the right (viewer’s left) and the man with the sponge is the opposite side—here the man with the sponge is replaced by the saintly centurion.

Scholars have unanimously observed that in this scene it is Longinus who is depicted; however, Western scholars mean by this the soldier with the spear, while Russian scholars mean the centurion (which corresponds with the difference between Western and Eastern cultural traditions described above—see §1.3). For example, Elisabeth Piltz writes that to the left of the Cross are depicted Mary and Longinus and to the right—the apostle John and the Centurion (Elisabeth Piltz, *Trois sakkoi byzantins analyse iconographique* [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1976], 32), while A. G. Barkov describes the scene thus: “The Centurion Longinus and the Roman soldier at the foot of the Golgotha occupy the space at the lower end of the Cross . . .” (Aleksii G. Barkov, “Sakkos,” in *Vizantijskie drevnosti: proizvedeniia iskusstva IV–XV vekov v sobranii Muzeev Moskovskogo Kremliia. Katalog*, ed. Irina A. Sterligova [Moscow: Pinakoteka, 2013], 488–513, at 492). Thus the Western scholar calls the soldier “Longinus,” ignoring the fact that the centurion can also have the same name and is also present in the same composition; the Russian scholar, however, gives the name “Longinus” to Longinus the Centurion without taking into account that the Roman soldier standing at the foot of the Cross can also be called by that name. We are grateful to I. M. Kachanova for drawing these descriptions to our attention.

Concerning the semiotics of profile representations see Boris A. Uspenskij, “Semiotika Ikony,” in Boris A. Uspenskij, *Semiotika iskusstva: poetika kompozitsii, semiotika ikony, Stat’i ob iskusstve* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul’tury, 1995), 219–294, at 275–276 and 287–288.

**89** The priest pierces that part of the Eucharistic Lamb where the letters IC (Jesus) is stamped. The whole inscription on the Lamb is: IC XC NIKA (Jesus Christ conquers). See Nikol’skii, *Posobie k izucheniiu ustava bogoslužheniia*, 363; Kiprian Kern, *Evkharistiia: Iz chtenii v Pravoslavnom bogoslovskom institute v Parizhe* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Khrama svv. Kosmy i Damiana na Maroseike, 2001), 123.

**90** See Nikol’skii, *Posobie k izucheniiu ustava bogoslužheniia pravoslavnoi Tserkvi*, 364; Kern, *Evkharistiia: Iz chtenii v Pravoslavnom bogoslovskom institute v Parizhe*, 122–23.



If the “Lamb” represents Christ symbolically and the “spear” symbolizes the spear with which he was pierced, then the priest must obviously represent the soldier who struck Christ. The commentary on the liturgy (*Ecclesiastical History*) attributed to St Germanos I, patriarch of Constantinople († before 754) uses the word λόγχη “spear” speaking of the liturgical knife with which the priest takes out the Lamb during the Proskomedia; at the same time Christ is likened in the commentary to a lamb pierced in the side by a spear.<sup>91</sup> However, there is nothing here about the piercing of the “Lamb” (the communion bread) by the priest. The “spear” and the “sponge” used in the liturgy were presented as symbols of suffering and glorification of Christ: they brought to mind the Passion of Christ, but did not appear as the actual instruments of the Passion, which is the case in the Proskomedia later on.<sup>92</sup>

This ceremony is presented like a miracle play, reproducing the events described in John 19:34, with the role of Christ’s crucifier unexpectedly transferred to the priest. “In the Venetian Greek service book [in the Proskomedia] the words ‘Pierce, O master!’ are absent. On the other hand, in the Jerusalem service book, after the words ‘Sacrificed is the Lamb of God,’ the deacon’s exclamation is ‘Crucify, O master! (σταύρωσον, Δέσποτα)’ and the priest says, ‘When you were crucified, O Christ, the tyranny [of the devil] perished’.”<sup>93</sup> The role of crucifier is expressed here very clearly.<sup>94</sup>

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91 Meyendorff, *Germanus of Constantinople*, 70–73, 84–85; Borgia, *Il commentario liturgico di s. Germano*, 19, 29.

92 Indicative in this sense is the use in the liturgy of an “antimension sponge,” i.e., a sponge which is placed on the *antimension* (altar cloth with relics) and used “to wipe the paten (*diskos*) over the chalice after all the fragments on the paten have been dropped into the chalice.” It is thought that this “signifies that sponge which, steeped in gall and vinegar, was offered to the mouth of Lord Jesus” (Nikol’skii, *Posobie k izucheniiu ustava bogosluzheniia*, 17). However, this usage of the sponge does not reflect the meaning it had in the gospel story (not directly linked with the act of the crucifier of Christ). Also, the liturgical knife (λόγχη, *kopie*) originally had a purely symbolic meaning and was not directly linked with the act of piercing the body of Christ.

St Germanos’s commentary on the liturgy did not refer to the sponge as a liturgical object.

93 Kern, *Evkharistiia*, 123.

94 “The paten, with the sacrificed and pierced Lamb (communion bread) [taken out from the first prosphora], surrounded by the particles [taken out from the other prosphoras] dedicated to the Mother of God, the saints, and the living and the dead, represents the Church both in Heaven and on Earth. At the same time this paten is the image of the Nativity scene at Bethlehem with the Son of God who was born in time, and is being born eternally in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. This is the Lamb, which was destined to be sacrificed before the creation of the world (1 Pet 1:19–20). This mystical predestination, not revealed to the world before the certain time, is symbolized, according to [Nicholas] Kabasilas, by the fact that the whole of the proskomedia up to its end remains concealed, hidden not only from the world but even from the clergy” (Kern, *Evkharistiia*, 136–37; with reference to Nicholas Kabasilas’s fourteenth-century *Commentary on the Liturgy* [PG 150: 367–492, at 389]).

The sacrifice (Slavonic *zaklanie*, “sacrificing by stabbing”) of the Lamb must be distinguished from its piercing (Slavonic *probodenie*). The word sacrifice here should be understood as the preparation of the Lamb, when the priest cuts out the Lamb (a cube of bread) from the prosphora while speaking the prophetic verses from Isaiah about the passion and death of the Lord, in particular “Like a sheep that

7.3. The piercing of the Lamb ritual in the Proskomedia appears relatively late both among the Greeks and in Rus. It is only since the twelfth–thirteenth century that the priest has begun to pronounce the words of the Gospel of John about the soldier who pierced the body of Christ (“one of the soldiers pierced him with a spear . . .,” John 19:34), and originally this phrase was not accompanied by the act of piercing the Lamb; at that time the priest would pour wine and water into the chalice.<sup>95</sup> The words pronounced at this point signified a remembrance of this event and linked it with the Eucharist.<sup>96</sup> Characteristically, the phrase from John 19:34 could be combined with the words of the First Epistle of John about the blood, the water, and the Spirit (1 John 5:8),

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is led to the slaughter,” “like a lamb that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7–8). Following the first of these verses the preparation of the Lamb is defined as *sacrificium*. The piercing is performed on the sacrificed Lamb.

95 See Sergei D. Muretov, “Chin proskomidii v Russkoi tserkvi s XII po XIV v. (do mitropolita Kipriana †1406),” *Chteniia v Obshchestve liubitelei dukhovnogo prosveshcheniia*, anno 31 (1894), no. 10: 485–528, at 494, 499; Aleksandr V. Petrovskii, “Drevnii akt prinosheniia veshchestva dlia tainstva evkharistii i posledovanie proskomidii,” *Khristianskoe Chtenie*, no. 3 (1904): 421.

Earlier, as far as is known, the priest would speak of the appearance of blood and water from the body of Christ, but said nothing about the soldier, i.e., what was mentioned was not the episode itself, in chronological order of events, but what happened finally to the body of Christ. In Germanos’s commentary the relevant words were spoken not by the priest but by the deacon: “. . . he [the priest] takes the holy chalice, and the deacon, pouring the wine and water into it, [. . .] says: ‘there flowed forth blood and water from his side, and he who saw it bore witness, and his witness is true’ [cf. John 19:34–35]. And after that he [the priest] places the holy chalice on the side table and, pointing with his finger to the Lamb, sacrificed in the bread, and to the blood [. . .] says: ‘and there are three witnesses, the spirit, the water and the blood, and the three become one [1 John 5:8] and now and always and to all eternity.’” (Meyendorff, *Germanus of Constantinople, 72–73*; Borgia, *Il commentario liturgico di S. Germano*, 19, 29).

96 In the present-day rite wine and water are mixed in the chalice after the piercing of the Lamb, and their mingling is preceded both by the exclamation of the deacon addressed to the priest: “Bless, O master, the holy mixture!,” and by the blessing of the priest (Nicol’skii, *Posobie k izucheniiu ustava bogosluzheniia*, 34; Kern, *Evkharistiia*, 123). In this way the mingling of the wine and water turn out to be linked here with the piercing of the Lamb. Earlier the words of the Gospel were directly linked to the mingling of the wine and water, necessary for the preparation of the Holy Gifts. But now these words accompany the act of piercing, symbolically representing the release of the blood and water.

With regard to this see the questions of the Catholics voiced at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, 1438–1442: “Why do we [the Greeks], say [while performing the proskomedia], although it is not yet the Body of Christ, ‘And one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out [John 19:34].’” (Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*, vol. 31 [Venice: Antonius Zatta, 1798], 1040; cf. Mikhail Asmus, “Opredelenie rimo-katolicheskoi tserkvi o chastitsakh proskomidii,” *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta. Serii 1: Bogoslovie. Filosofii. Religiovedenie* 24 (2008): 13, note 9). The Catholics appear to have been arguing from the “verba institutionis,” the words uttered by Christ at the Last Supper and repeated by the priest in celebrating the Eucharist: “Take, eat, this is my body” and “Drink from it all of you, this is my blood.” Since the side of Christ was pierced after the Last Supper, the use of this phrase from the John 19:34 in the proskomedia, before the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts, was causing puzzlement.

testifying about Christ: “There are three witnesses: the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three are as one.”<sup>97</sup> These words are understood traditionally as referring specifically to the Eucharist: at the invocation of the Holy Spirit the water and wine are transformed into blood.

With time, however, the priest began to enact the event itself as depicted in the Gospel of John, thus likening himself to the soldier who pierced the body of Christ. Nicholas Kabasilas († 1392) in his fourteenth-century *Commentary on the Liturgy* speaks of the piercing of the Lamb and refers directly to the act of the soldier:

After this he [the priest] pierces the bread, and from the side which appears as right, expressing by the piercing of the bread the piercing of the side [of Christ]; for this reason the instrument used for piercing is called a spear (λόγχη) and may be fashioned in the shape of a spear so that it may recall that [original] spear. By thus representing the act of piercing, he at the same time conveys the actual event with the words ‘And one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear.’<sup>98</sup>

This action entered into the liturgical rule of the Patriarch of Constantinople Philotheos Kokkinos (1345–1376),<sup>99</sup> and thence into Rus; in Rus it seems to have appeared first in the

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97 RNB, Sof., 518, fol. 17v, thirteenth century, quoted by Sergei D. Muretov, *K materialam dlia istorii chinoposledovaniia liturgii* (Sergiev Posad: tip. A. I. Snegirevoi, 1895), 64. See also Hieromonk Filaret (Zakharovich), *Chin liturgii Sv. Ioanna Zlatoustogo po izlozheniiu staropechatnykh, novoispravlennogo i drevlepis'mennykh sluzhebnykh* (Moscow: Bratstvo sv. Petra mitropolita, 1876), 35–36.

In a few service books the priest pronounces: “There are three witnesses in Heaven, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the blood, and the water” (Sergei D. Muretov, *Istoricheskii obzor chinoposledovaniia proskomidii do “Ustava Liturgii” Konstantinopol'skogo Patriarkha Filofeia: Opyt istoriko-liturgicheskogo issledovaniia* [Moscow: pech. A. I. Snegirevoi, 1895], 240.). These words correspond to the Latin New Testament (cf.: “Quoniam tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in caelo: Pater, Verbum, et Spiritus Sanctus: et hi tres unum sunt. Et tres sunt, qui testimonium dant in terra: Spiritus, et aqua, et sanguis: et hi tres unum sunt”), but they are missing in the original Greek text. In the critical edition of the Greek New Testament the passage “ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα· καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσι” (in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit) is considered to be a late interpolation, a borrowing from the Latin. In the ancient Proskomedia this phrase is absent, see Muretov, “Chin proskomidii v Russkoi tserkvi s XII po XIV v. (do mitropolita Kipriana †1406),” 510–512.

In the service books quoted, in the Proskomedia the words spirit, blood, and water are mentioned in this order, although in the actual epistle of John water comes first, then blood (ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα); see also MS Yaroslavl Museum-Reserve, 15472, fol. 6v quoted by Tat'iana I. Afanas'eva, *Liturgii Ioanna Zlatousto i Vasiliia Velikogo v slavianskoi traditsii: (po sluzhebnykam XI–XV vv.)* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2015), 126. Possibly this is influenced by the gospel text (John 19:34) where it is said that “there flowed forth blood and water” (αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ). See above, note 17.

98 PG 150:385. Cf. Symeon, Archbishop of Thessaloniki († 1429) in his commentary on the liturgy: “then he pierces the bread from the right side with a spear, depicting and doing exactly what was actually done to the salvific body of Christ” (*De sacra liturgia*, 85, PG 155: 264).

99 Published in Nikolai F. Krasnosel'tsev, *Materialy dlia istorii chinoposledovaniia liturgii Sv. Ioanna Zlatoustago* (Kazan: Tip. Imp. universiteta, 1889), 42. Cf. Petrovskii, “Drevnii Akt prinosheniia Veshchestva Dlia Tainstva Evkharistii i posledovanie Proskomidii,” 421, note 3.

service book of Metropolitan Kiprian (1375–1406) at the end of the fourteenth–beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>100</sup>

This practice did not take hold immediately: this association of the priest with the soldier in the Gospel of John may have appeared strange, and some priests at first tried to avoid it. Thus, Metropolitan Fotii or Photios (a Greek), who succeeded Kiprian in the Rus metropolitanate (1410–1431), in a message to Pskov of 1419 which contained a detailed description of how to conduct the Proskomedie, noted in particular that the Lamb should not be pierced, but that at the appropriate moment the priest should touch the Lamb with the liturgical knife *without piercing it*.<sup>101</sup> The act of the officiating priest has in this case a didactic and edifying character: pronouncing the words of the gospel about the soldier who pierced the body of Christ, the priest does not represent that soldier but accompanies his words with particular explanatory gestures.<sup>102</sup>

Gradually, however, piercing the Lamb during the Proskomedie became a general practice.

7.4. Thus, the priest when performing the Proskomedie in the liturgy pronounces the words of John 19:34, and illustrates these words with actions, imitating thereby Longinus the Soldier. The very fact of the priest imitating the crucifier of Christ is so strange that the question arises: is it possible that this is in some measure a reflection of the perception of Longinus the Soldier as a saint, the proclaimer of the Eucharist, which had been preserved in the West (see above, §4.2)? It does at least seem clear that the actions of this soldier are in one way or another interpreted as being linked with the Eucharist. Can we perhaps contemplate that the Orthodox East had adopted the Western cult of Longinus the Soldier? We have no grounds for such a proposition. We do not have any evidence of veneration of Longinus the Soldier as such in the Orthodox East; on the contrary, he is regarded there as a wholly negative person (see above, §7.1).

However, we know that in the Western tradition the cults of Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion (venerated in the East) have merged. In the Catholic

**100** MS GIM, Sinod., 601, published by Krasnosel'tsev, *Materialy Dlia Istorii Chinoposledovaniia Liturgii Sv. Ioanna Zlatoustago*, 43.

**101** *Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka, Izdavaemaia Arkheograficheskoiu Komissieiu*, vol. 6 (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1908<sup>2</sup>), cols. 405–406.

**102** The Moscow Council of a Hundred Chapters of 1551, the so-called *Stoglav*, describing in detail the actions to be performed in the Proskomedie (see *Stoglav: Tekst, Slovoukazatel'* [Moscow and St. Petersburg: Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ, 2015], fols. 54–55), does not mention piercing the Lamb but speaks only of its sacrifice (*zaklanie*), i.e., removing the central part of the bread from the prosphora: “. . . the priests and the deacons do everything; they perform the Proskomedie and sacrifice the Holy Lamb and take out [the Lamb and the particles from] the prosphoras . . .” (*Stoglav: Tekst, Slovoukazatel'*, fol. 52v). In the earliest Slavic translation of the *Church History* of Patriarch Germanos, the Proskomedie is called *obrezanie*, “circumcision” (GIM, Sinod., 262, fol. 252v, see Tat'iana I. Afanas'eva, *Drevneslavianskie tolkovaniia na liturgiiu v rukopisnoi traditsii XII–XVI vv.: Issledovanie i teksty* [Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2012], 29, 257).

West, unlike the Orthodox East, it was thought that Longinus the Centurion was the soldier who pierced the side of Christ and then came to believe in him and openly professed his faith (see above, §5.1). Eventually, probably in the late Byzantine period, this perception began to spread in the Orthodox East also, although it was not adopted there immediately, and won acceptance only gradually.

Thus, in a Byzantine Passion play of the thirteenth century, the centurion who professed faith in Christ appears as *ὁ ἑκατόνταρχος* “the centurion,” while the soldier who pierced the side of Christ with a spear is called *ὁ κεντηρίων*, that is, the Latin word “centurion” transliterated in Greek letters. In other words, they are both called “centurion,” one using the Greek word and the other using a word borrowed from Latin;<sup>103</sup> it should be reminded that both these words appear in the Gospels to denote the “saintly centurion” (in Matthew and Luke the word *ἑκατόνταρχος* is used, in Mark it is *κεντυρίων*). Obviously one and the same person is described here, and this would appear to be evidence of the merging of Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion in Byzantium.<sup>104</sup>

The same kind of assimilation is perhaps reflected in the ceremony of piercing the Lamb in the Proskomedie. The merging of Longinus the Soldier with Longinus the Centurion removed from the soldier who pierced Christ the negative characteristics attributed to him in the Orthodox tradition (see above, §7.1).

The Orthodox priest, when repeating the actions of the soldier who pierced Christ with his spear, may not associate himself with this soldier, but nevertheless such an association naturally arises when the gospel text of John 19:34 is pronounced. In a situation where Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion are perceived as the same person this association does not appear blasphemous. One would consider the possibility of Western influence in this case, since the very merging of Longinus the Soldier and Longinus the Centurion, entirely normal today in Orthodoxy, seems to have come to the Orthodox East from the West.

Does the foregoing mean that the Orthodox priest during the Proskomedie is directly portraying the holy centurion? Such a conclusion would hardly be justified, and in general in this context any kind of firm interpretation would be inappropriate. The actions of the priest in essence recall the depiction of the thirteenth-century Crucifixion discussed above (§4.2, 6.2), a depiction in which the figure of Longinus the Soldier is turned into a female figure symbolizing the Church: she is opening the body of Christ with a spear, thus prefiguring the Eucharist (Figure 4.1). This iconography, as we remember, is of Western origin.

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**103** Franz Joseph Dölger, “Die Blutsalbung des Soldaten mit der Lanze im Passionsspiel Christus Patiens. Zugleich Ein Beitrag Zur Longinus-Legende,” *Antike Und Christentum*, 4 (1934): 82; Berg, “Une Iconographie Peu Connue Du Crucifiement,” 328. See editions Albert Vogt, “Études Sur Le Théâtre Byzantin,” *Byzantion* 6, no. 2 (1931): 60; August Carl Mahr, *The Cyprus Passion Cycle* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1947), 199.

**104** Dölger, “Die Blutsalbung des Soldaten,” 82.

It seems probable that the piercing of the Lamb in the proskomedia derives from the influence of Western theology on Byzantine religious thinking; to all appearances this reflects the ecclesiological character of the perception of Longinus the Soldier, which in turn explains the cult itself of this saint in the Western Church. There was no Office of Oblation in the West; however, the piercing of the Lamb in the Byzantine proskomedia can be explained as the result of adoption of Western ideas in the Orthodox East.

*Translated by W. F. Ryan*

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